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MEMOIRS of A CYNIC

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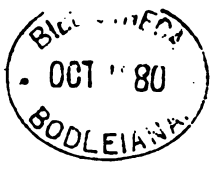
MEMOIRS OF A CYNIC.

EDITED BY

WILLIAM GILBERT,

AUTHOR OF "SHIRLEY HALL ASYLUM," ETC.

VOL. II.



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MEMOIRS OF A CYNIC.

CHAPTER XV.

FLORENCE.

I REMAINED only a week in Padua after the opening of the theatre, nor did I quit it with the slightest regret. During the time, with the exception of the ghost, I saw but little of my companions, less perhaps of the Semiramide and Grandolfi than any of the others. Indeed, so little did I see of them, that it might have been thought that a quarrel had occurred between us, but this was far from being the case. The theatrical public, as mentioned in the last chapter, were split into two parties, the German and the Italian, and the two principal singers were each on her own side trying to keep her

admirers to herself. The Impresario did all he could to encourage the feud between the two sections of his audience, as it tended to fill his theatre, which would hardly have been the case had its success depended solely on the ability of his artistes.

When one day at the dinner table I announced my intention of leaving Padua on the morrow, the whole of the company expressed the greatest regret at my quitting them; at the same time, I could easily perceive by the exaggerated or, rather, caricatured expression of sorrow on their faces that it was perfectly indifferent to them, whether I went or stayed. Grandolfi, perhaps, was an exception and the only one; there was a slight tone of sorrow in her voice which was wanting in the others, though, perhaps, even there, I might have been mistaken. When I mentioned that it was possible I might stay a week in Venice, she even went so far as to express a hope that as the distance was so short between the two cities, I would pay Padua a visit during the time. For my own part, I cannot say that I was really sorry at the idea of parting, even with the Grandolfi. She was a volatile, passionate, and vain woman; at the same time there was

something loveable about her after all. Her behaviour to her Babbo, as she called him, did her great credit, and showed that with all her faults she had a grateful heart and was fully able to appreciate an act of kindness. Indeed so much did I admire her behaviour to the poor old man that I determined to present her with a little token of my esteem, and when I was in Venice I forwarded to her, in a letter, an order on a banker in Padua for the sum of a hundred French francs, telling her when she had received it to acknowledge it by letter, addressed to me, Post Office, Florence. I took good care, however, not to send the money till the day before I left Venice, lest on some Friday (on that day of the week the theatres were closed) she might, in a fit of gratitude, pay me a visit there, an honour I did not desire.

Though I liked Grandolfi, as I said before, I never felt for her the slightest love, and the more intimate we got the less was the probability of a sentiment of the kind occurring. The reader may possibly remember in Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship," the episode of his love affair with the actress Mariana. In it he relates how certain things he would otherwise

have objected to pleased him in her; how his having to remove her not over-clean corset from the piano before she played, seemed a symbol to him of the intimate relations which existed between them. Grandolfi's equally liberal display of portions of her dress had a totally contrary effect on me, and, to speak candidly the truth, it rather disgusted me than otherwise. Altogether I was tired of my associates, and when I had taken a place in the passage boat, which went down the river from Padua to Venice, I felt thoroughly contented at having dropped my acquaintance with the whole of them.

My companions in the passage boat were of a very mixed description. There were two or three priests, some peasant men and women, some tradesmen, and two or three sailors, who had quitted their ships at Venice for a few days' holiday with their friends in Padua. The conversation was carried on among us in a very lively, good-humoured manner, the priests, of course, being the principal authorities on any subject under consideration. I also came in for no little share of attention, and in cases where I was unable to explain myself clearly—for, well as I understood the Milanese dialect, I was

frequently at a loss in the Venetian—my reverend fellow passengers translated for me; and so we continued our journey onward till in the evening we arrived at Fusina.

It would be difficult to describe my sensations when first beholding Venice. There was something magical in the scene, and the domes, spires, and palaces lit up as they were by the evening sun seemed positively floating on a sea of crystal. At present this exquisite illusion is lost to the traveller arriving by railway. The viaduct which now connects the city with the mainland effects a continuity which utterly destroys the fairylike scene which formerly used to present itself to the visitor. Nor in my case was the illusion destroyed the nearer we came to the entrance of the city, for when the gondola passed through the Grand Canal, I seemed to behold, as in a dream, that Venice which I had hitherto so much admired in the paintings of Canaletti in the Louvre and other picture galleries. The illusion was hardly destroyed when I arrived at the hotel (I forget its name, but it was on the Grand Canal, near the Rialto), and it was not till the next morning that I found myself at home in the city.

I will not detain the reader with any minute description of my next eighteen months' residence in Italy, for frankly, I now feel ashamed of the idle life I led there. All correspondence had long ceased between my uncle and myself, beyond the official note from him every three months, advising me that he had forwarded my allowance, and my equally formal reply acknowledging its receipt, and telling him the town to which the next should be forwarded.

On quitting Venice, after a three months' sojourn, I proceeded through Padua to Ferrara, Modena and Bologna, stopping a month or six weeks in each place. My love for the theatre had returned to me, but in a modified degree, that is to say, I attended regularly the performances in the different theatres, but made no more associates among the actors and actresses.

In Florence I remained for more than six months, and here I took up another crotchet. From continually visiting the Picture Gallery, I at length conceived the idea that I would give up all thought of entering the legal profession, and become an artist. I now not only purchased several works on the Fine Arts and studied them attentively, but entered myself as a pupil in the

class of an artist of considerable ability. He and I, however, agreed but for a short time, as he insisted on my studying the art from its first principles, I, on the contrary, wishing to commence painting at once. The idea had entered my mind that any man of common taste could understand any object he conceived or saw, quite as well as an artist; that the hand being made the agent of the mind, would, with some little practice, be able to transfer upon paper the object both in form and colour the eye saw. Frequently I endeavoured to instil this principle into him, but he laughed at the idea so heartily that I began to be ashamed of it, and drudged steadily on. Then again, the theory of a certain Monsieur Jacoto, in Paris, who was at the time making a considerable stir, came before me, which was to the effect that a person, instead of studying a language grammatically, should first learn it verbally, and then reduce it to its first principles The same idea had also been taken up by other visionaries in different parts of the world, and I argued that if such a principle could be applied to the study of a language, why should it not be equally applicable to one of the Fine Arts.

As I found it impossible to get the Professor to entertain my theory, I quitted his class, and determined to carry on my studies without the assistance of any teacher. I argued that, although to speak a language it would be necessary, at whichever end it was commenced, whether from Jacoto's system or from the grammar, to have some instruction with drawing and painting, however, it was different, and that with the exception of manipulation and mixing of colours any man could teach himself—it merely wanted practice, nothing more. I now supplied myself with every material requisite, and commenced assiduously to copy models and paintings which I had purchased, or were lent to me by my friends. To say the truth, my success was of the most imperfect description, and I could not disguise from myself that the drawings I had made were utterly contemptible, so I determined to give up the idea. As I did not like to acknowledge myself in error to my former master, I resolved to seek another. I now began to make inquiries where I could find a teacher somewhat less arbitrary, or at anyrate, less likely to insist on my commencing with the first rules of the art.

Before, however, I succeeded in discovering one with whom I was likely to agree, my eye, unfortunately, one morning, when looking over a volume of Boccaccio fell upon the tale known as "The Tent-maker's Wife." It rivetted my attention to such a degree that I do not think I took my eye off the book till I had finished the tale, and then, throwing it on the table by my side, I began to reflect coolly over the events contained in that exquisite narrative. To detail it at any length would occupy too much space. It was simply to the effect that a young fellow who had been deeply in love with a girl had been separated from her. In the meantime she, imagining him to be dead, had married another, and after a short time her former love appeared. Nothing could be more exquisite than the simple manner in which Boccaccio narrated the tale, with, perhaps, the exception of its translation into English verse, by the late Robert B. Brough.* Suffice it to say the girl died, and her lover was broken-hearted. He wandered moodily and listlessly about, unable to apply himself either to his ordinary occupation, or to find solace in

* "Welcome Guest."

amusements. Among his associates was a certain Fra Gerolamo, a monk in the convent near him. The character this monk bore was of too rollicking a description for our modern ideas of an ecclesiastical life, and perhaps he even exceeded the more liberal view taken in subjects of the kind in the days of Boccaccio himself. But he had certain redeeming qualities. He was good-natured and liberal, and moreover (which perhaps closed the eyes of his superior to his faults), he was an admirable artist. Not only were the principal paintings of his own convent the products of his pencil, but he also contributed greatly to the receipts of the monastery by the sale of others to different patrons of art.

One day Fra Gerolamo met the poor lover wandering listlessly about the streets, and tried to cheer him, but with very little good effect. He invited him to accompany him to his studio, where the monk soon applied himself to work at his easel, his friend watching him the while. At last the monk advised him to take a pencil and see whether he could not draw something himself. The young fellow followed his advice, and, going to another easel, commenced, clumsily enough, a female head, which he told the monk

he intended as a portrait of the girl he had lost. It bore, however, not the slightest similarity to her, and Fra Gerolamo, rubbing it out, told him to come the next day and try again. He did so, and day after day he continued the same routine, each day improving somewhat in his effort, which was again obliterated by the monk, till at length he succeeded in producing a perfect resemblance.

Here was to me a proof that my theory was not altogether an incorrect one. True, the young fellow was evidently inspired by the love he bore the girl; but could not I conjure up one of my old loves to serve as a type for me to copy? I now went *seriatim* through the list of my old loves, all of which I have narrated faithfully to the reader, beginning with the little daughter of the mistress of the workhouse, and ending with Juliet, for although, as I said before, I admired Grandolfi, the contralto, I did not bear for her the slightest affection. All my efforts were, however, without success. I remembered nothing of my first love, the little girl, but a pair of leggings; what her features were like I did not in the least know. The face of the "fragile tendril," who had made so deep an

impression on me before I went to sea, were also completely obliterated from my memory. I was more successful in bringing to mind the features of the quartermaster's daughter, who was a passenger on board the ship in which I was midshipman, but hardly in a sufficiently satisfactory manner as to impress her as vividly on my mind as the poor lover described by Boccaccio. Juliet's features I remembered well, but whenever I thought of the poor girl a certain uneasy sensation came over me. I always felt that I had behaved to her in a very ungentlemanly manner, and the girl very properly treated me with the contempt I deserved; so I declined trying her portrait. Then came before me the features of the elderly laundry-maid with whom, when at school, I had fallen in love. On her features I made the attempt, and to a certain degree succeeded —that is to say, my production was a clumsy representation of an ill-favoured elderly woman, nothing more. I then gave up the attempt, and again determined to commence the study of painting under the instructions of an artist.

During my residence in Florence, I had formed acquaintance with some English families residing there for the winter, and among them several

young people who had entered the class of a celebrated professor, who, if he did not teach painting, as certain professors in London teach handwriting, in six lessons, guaranteed to complete them as artists by the end of the season. He had two classes of about twelve pupils each, who studied on alternate days in the galleries, he superintending them the while, going from one to the other, always complimenting them on their exertions. By some singular stroke of good fortune, he seemed never to have a pupil in whom he did not, at first sight, discover great artistic ability—at least, he said so. Certainly, the assistance he rendered his pupils was indisputably great. I should say that more than half the touches in any one picture they produced were by his own hand. I called on him at his house for the purpose of an interview, but, not finding him at home, I left my card.

The next day he called on me, and I explained to him the object of my visit. He replied that he should like to see some of my productions, as he never accepted a pupil who had not ability. He would not, for any remuneration, undertake the instruction of a pupil who had not a love for the art. I told him that, although I had but

little knowledge of the art of painting, my love for it was unbounded, and that, if he drew the average from these facts, I trusted he would find I had sufficient ability to enter one of his classes. I then showed him some of my productions, anxious to know his opinion of them. He certainly seemed more astonished at my ability than otherwise. Each sketch which passed under his eye he said, "*Bene, bene,*" which encouraged me greatly. And when he came to the sketch I had made, after the fashion of Boccaccio's hero, of the quartermaster's daughter, "*Benissimo,*" he cried, "*Benissimo, veramente benissimo,*" but then somewhat annulled my satisfaction by saying afterwards, "Who is this old woman?" Upon the whole, however, he seemed satisfied with my drawings, and I entered as pupil one of his classes, promising to meet him the next morning with my easel and implements in the Tribune of the gallery at Florence.

I will not tire the reader by describing the various copies of paintings I made in the gallery, not, understand me, those in the Tribune. I worked assiduously the days of his lessons, and studied equally assiduously in the intervening days, different works of the Fine Arts. From

different loungers who frequented the gallery, and who were accustomed to make their remarks pretty freely on the efforts of the pupils, I received but little encouragement. During the whole time I may say I heard but one compliment. I was at the time occupied on a painting of "Judith and Holofernes," when a stout, florid-looking man, with a wife and family of daughters, approached me and gazed silently for some moments at my picture. At last *paterfamilias* said: "I never saw anything more natural in my life. You might take that blood running from the neck to be real blood painted on the canvas instead of oil;" and all the family agreed in the criticism. I must say I felt annoyed at the remark; still, I said nothing, and went on with my painting, and the bad effect was afterwards considerably modified by the professor complimenting me in a very flattering manner on the other parts of my picture. I continued on in this manner for some weeks longer, when one day a circumstance occurred which totally drove from me all idea of becoming an artist by profession. I had been engaged in making a reduced copy of the painting of "Susanah and the Elders"—I forget by what artist. I was not

a little proud of my production, and the professor complimented me highly on it. One morning, on going to the gallery to complete it, I saw the professor talking with a French artist lately arrived in Florence. They were examining the different paintings of the professor's pupils, and, unaware of my vicinity, passing on them remarks which would have been felt as highly unflattering by the pupils engaged on them. At last my picture was put before the French artist.

"What do you think of that copy of 'Susanah and the Elders?'" said the professor.

"'Susanah and the Elders,'" replied the artist. "Why, I had taken it for 'The Temptation of St. Anthony!'"

I was so disgusted with the remark that I turned on my heel and hurriedly left the gallery.

Although the bare supposition that my painting in any manner whatever resembled "The Temptation of St. Anthony" was an absurdity, the French artist evidently intended by his reply that the painting I had considered as my *chef d'œuvre* was utterly without talent, and the expression on the professor's countenance endorsed the opinion. Without further hesitation I determined on relinquishing all idea of

becoming an artist, and left Florence, having profited but very little in artistic skill, but taking away with me from the books I had read, and the conversations I had heard, an immense amount of Fine Art slang which has since served me, as well as many other Fine Art critics, who shall be nameless, in a very useful and profitable manner.

From Florence I went through Sienna to Rome, where I remained some months. If my time did not pass there in a *dolce far niente* manner, it was something very like it. I mixed a little in English as well as in Italian society, and the remaining portion of my time was spent either in reading or visiting the different antiquities so thickly spread over the city, the surrounding *campagna*, and the mountains. The more I studied these objects of antiquity the more interesting they became, till at last they seemed to me, as I believe they do to a great many other foreigners, as interesting antiquarian riddles of which we guessed the solution; and when we had done so, by the way, we generally found some other authority who assured us we were wrong.

The Capitol and the Forum alone occupied

me a fortnight, and I was about as uncertain on most of the points I investigated as I was at the time I commenced them. The Fine Arts Galleries I also frequently visited, and if I did not feel any very great pleasure in their inspection from the unfortunate termination of my artistic studies in Florence, I managed to impress objects on my eye the most approved by *connoisseurs*, and then applied to them the Fine Art slang I had carried away with me, till at last I began to be looked upon by my acquaintance as really an authority on subjects of the kind, though, Heaven knows, I hardly deserved it. From the doubts, however, which existed on the merits of a certain picture or statue, I at last came to the conclusion that its beauties were frequently more imaginary than real, and that the value of a picture depended more on the name of the artist whose work it was professed to be than any intrinsic worth of its own, and sveral circumstances which occurred while I was in Rome went far to confirm me in my conclusion.*

* Some forty-five years ago, a French artist solicited and obtained permission to copy a small landscape of Salvator Rosa's in the museum at the Capitol. He was a man of considerable talent, and the copy he made was a very faithful

From Rome I went to Naples, and from thence further south, idling my time away in a most lamentable manner, till at last I began to be ashamed of my course of life, and determined to return northwards, and after spending some time in Germany return to England.

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one, and exactly the size of the original. At last he had only one day's work more to complete it, but the time for closing the gallery arrived before he had quite finished. Placing a five franc piece in the hand of the custodian, he told him that as he was obliged to leave Rome the next day, he should feel grateful if he would allow him to remain for a couple of hours longer in the gallery before he closed it for the night, that he might take his picture in a finished state away with him. The man willingly granted him the favour he asked, and just as night was closing in the Frenchman packed up his picture, he wished him good evening, and the next day departed from Rome. Two months afterwards some alterations took place in the position of the pictures in the museum, and when the landscape of Salvator Rosa's was taken from the wall, it was noticed that the canvas on which it was painted was not only quite modern, but of a quality perfectly different to that generally used by Salvator Rosa. The attention of the inspector was called to the fact, and it was then discovered that the Frenchman, on the evening of his departure, had taken with him the original painting, leaving his copy in its place, and it was more than two months before the fraud was detected.

CHAPTER XVI.

SIENNA.

At the time of my determination to return northward I had been more than two years in Italy without giving any explanation to my uncle for my prolonged stay. Nor did he in any manner appear to require it. His letters continued in the same short, business-like tone and manner, for which I was thankful, as it formed a good excuse to my conscience for writing him short letters in return. To say the truth, my unjustifiable waste of time since I had been in Italy came vividly before me, and I determined to reform. But the same unlucky run of events which had hitherto counteracted almost every good determination I had arrived at occurred again in the present instance. Perhaps I have explained myself badly in making use of the word "unlucky" on this occasion, for when I reflect coolly over the matter, although the event

I now allude to was for some time painful—fearfully painful—to me, the fruits have been one continued solace and relief. All this, no doubt, appears paradoxical to the reader, but if he will afford me his patience I have no doubt I shall be able to offer a good excuse for my statement.

On returning northward I determined to visit Sienna. On my road to the south I had merely passed through it, contenting myself during the few hours I had remained there with visiting one or two of the principal curiosities. These, however, had sufficiently interested me to make me resolve on remaining there for some days should I visit the city again, and now I resolved to do so.

I arrived at Sienna about seven o'clock in the evening, and after having refreshed myself with dinner, or supper as they called it, at the inn, I inquired of the waiter if there were any theatres open. He said there was one, at which they gave both tragedy and comedy. To my inquiry whether the company were a good one, he told me that he had not seen them himself, but had heard that they were better than usual. Among them was a young tragic actress who had created

a good deal of sensation in Sienna, but what her particular merits were he was unable to say.

From the waiter's description I cannot say I felt much inclination to visit the theatre; but as some two or three hours had to pass before I sought my bed, I put on my hat and left the house. Once or twice before reaching the theatre I felt inclined to return to the hotel, but I continued onwards and took my place in the pit. The tragedy for the evening ("Joan of Arc") was nearly over by the time I arrived, so late was it. It had, in fact, reached the last scene, where the heroine is brought to the place of execution. I have already admitted how much I had been from time to time struck by theatrical heroines, but never had I been so much so as in the present instance. On former occasions my admiration had been more or less caused from want of experience in stage illusions. Now, although well up in the matter, never had any actress pleased me as highly as the one before me. She was tall, slim, and graceful. Her face was beautifully formed, with fine, large, expressive eyes, an intelligent forehead, crowned by abundant beautiful black, glossy hair, which at the time hung over her shoulders. Her hands and feet were small,

and exquisitely formed, and altogether she appeared to me one of the most attractive women I had ever seen. She had also another qualification which pleased me mightily. She had that clear, mild voice which Lear tells us is "an excellent thing in woman." Her enunciation was perfect; not a syllable did she utter that was not clear and distinct. The appearance of resignation she wore at the time was admirably identified with the character. There was nothing of the warlike heroine about her, or of that exuberant rapsody so frequently found on the faces of saints in the Italian school of painting, but a calm, sorrowful, and dignified expression. The curtain fell, and the actress was called before it to receive the applause of the audience, which was enthusiastic in the extreme. After the usual tedious delay in Italian theatres between the pieces, the curtain was drawn up for the after-piece, which proved to be a very stupid farce; in fact, I was thoroughly tired of it before it was half over, and returned to the hotel.

According to all precedent in matters of the kind, in my dreams that night I ought to have been haunted by the fair tragedian. Such, however, was not the case, or I should have remem-

bered it. In the course of the day she several times came vividly before me, especially in one of the churches, where there was a picture of an angel in a loose white robe, somewhat in form resembling that worn by Joan of Arc the evening before. I think there was also some similarity in the countenance, but whether it was merely the effect of my own imagination, or a reality, it was impossible to say. There was one feature in the picture of the angel which the actress had not, and that was holding a long lily in her hand.

That evening I was early at the theatre, indeed, some time before the performance commenced. Although unusual in Italian tragedy and comedy companies, the piece of the night before was to be played again that evening. Great as had been my admiration of the young actress when I had merely witnessed the last act, it was now unbounded. The different emotions of heroism, resignation, and piety she displayed were alternately developed so forcibly as to impress on my mind that her mental capacity was equal to the beauty of her person. The piece over, she was again called before the curtain, and was received, as on the previous

evening, with acclamation. Before the curtain drew up for the after-piece, I conversed with an elderly Siennese gentleman who was sitting by my side, on the merits of the young actress.

"She is indisputably a clever girl, and from all I understand, as good as she is talented," he said.

"Does she play her other pieces with as much intelligence as the one we have just seen?" I asked.

"Quite so," he replied; "for although Joan of Arc is the favourite character with the audience, it is rather that it sets off her personal characteristics to greater advantage than the others she has appeared in. If that girl's strength of constitution were equal to her talent, she would become famous, you may depend upon it."

"What makes you think she has a delicate constitution?" I asked.

"Well, in the first place it is easy to tell from her appearance that she is consumptive; and in the next, the doctor of the theatre, who is a friend of mine, has assured me of the fact. He has taken great interest in her, and says he has never met with a more amiable or talented girl in his life."

"She seems a great favourite with the Siennese public," I remarked.

"She is, and with justice," he said. "At the same time some Germans who have been here attempted at first to get up a cabal against her, which occasioned her some chagrin, but fortunately they did not succeed. They may possibly attempt it again to-morrow evening," he continued, "and I hope you will be present to support her. It will be both her benefit and last appearance, as she is to start next day to complete an engagement at Lucca."

I promised him that without fail I would be present, and having sat out the whole of the farce, which was scarcely less stupid than the evening before, I left the theatre.

The next evening, true to my promise, I attended the theatre. In a recess in the passage was a table, on which were two lighted wax candles, and a brass salver in the centre. Behind the table was seated Joan of Arc, already dressed for her part, with the exception that the stage paint was not on her face, and beside her stood an elderly stout woman, evidently her mother. I stopped several paces before reaching

her, and placing myself in such a position as not to attract attention, I watched the audience as they entered, most of whom placed some coin in the salver, varying from a five franc piece down to the lowest copper coin, all bowing kindly to her as they passed. Presently entered two men, evidently German officers, although they were dressed at the time in private clothes. One of them, as he passed, looked at me earnestly for some moments, as if he had seen me before, but could not call to mind who I was. I recognised him the moment I saw him as the Austrian Count with whom I had so nearly had a dispute when in Milan. I took no notice of him, however, and he advanced towards Joan of Arc, and said something to her which evidently annoyed her, and that too without putting anything into the salver. She answered in a quiet manner, and the Count burst into a loud, rude laugh, and made use of some expression to his friend, which was inaudible to me, and at which Joan of Arc coloured highly, and her mother remonstrated indignantly with him in very emphatic language. I came forward intending to interfere, but the Count and his friend had gone into the body of the house, so placing a napoleon in the salver,

I bowed to the young actress, and passing on, took my seat in the pit.

By a singular coincidence, I found myself seated on one side near the German Count, and on the other was my friend of the evening before, and a fine young Italian, who looked like a military man. The Count had evidently now recognised me, and regarded me with no very pleasant expression of countenance, which I do not think I returned, though possibly I may have done so, for I felt no little disgust at his impertinence to the poor girl when seated at the table. However, neither of us said anything, and I conversed quietly on different subjects with the Italian, till the curtain was drawn up, and the tragedy commenced.

A more perfect success than the acting of the young girl that evening could hardly have been imagined. At the same time, I thought I could distinguish occasionally failures in her voice as if the strength of lungs was not sufficient to give full tone to her words. My Italian neighbour also remarked it.

"Do you not now perceive the truth of what I told you yesterday evening, how delicate her constitution is?" said he. "You see she has great diffi-

culty in keeping up her voice without straining it, which would destroy the effect of the scene."

I perfectly agreed with him, and was about to say so, when her voice suddenly failed her. The audience immediately understanding the reason, applauded, with the exception of one or two unmistakeable hisses, one of which came from the German beside me. I felt my anger fast rising, but it occurred to me that he had as much right to express his displeasure as I had to express satisfaction, so I subdued the feeling as well as I could, and the piece went on to a conclusion; not, however, without the same failure on the part of the actress, and the same hisses on the part of a very few of the audience. When the curtain fell, the applause was loud and continuous, while the few hisses were also unmistakeably heard. The curtain was drawn aside, and the actress came forward to receive the congratulations of the audience, and express by pantomime her adieu.

Although the young actress was applauded vociferously, the few who expressed discontent were equally emphatic, and among them the German by my side, whose hisses were not only louder than the others, but he made use of an

expression most insulting as well as undeserved by the young girl to whom it was addressed. My patience now fairly gave way, and I told the German he was a contemptible, cowardly fellow, and that if the acting did not please him, he had the power of keeping away instead of insulting a girl in the manner he had done.

"My dear sir," he replied, with great calmness, "I could answer you on the spot if I pleased; but if it comes within your ideas of good breeding to create a brawl in a theatre, it does not within mine. If you will come out into the street, we can there talk the matter over coolly, and it will give me great pleasure after having received your lesson on good breeding, to give you one in return, and it shall be no fault of mine if it does not end in such a manner as shall make you remember it for life." So saying he left the theatre, and I, accompanied by my two Italian neighbours, followed.

I found the German Count and his friend waiting for me in the street, and immediately advanced to meet him. He began the conversation.

"I don't think," he said, "there will be any necessity for much conversation between us. I

remember when you quitted Milan that I owed you some acknowledgment for the impertinence you thought fit to offer me there, and with the additional provocation of this evening, I trust you will afford me the satisfaction I have a right to ask."

"It will give me infinite pleasure," I replied. "I shall be most happy to receive any communication from you at the hotel where I am staying. Let it be soon, however, as I intend to remain in Sienna only a few days longer."

"Possibly," he said, with a satirical smile, "it may be longer than you anticipate."

As I did not choose to keep up any altercation in the street, I left him, and the two Italians followed me.

Before reaching the hotel the idea struck me that I was not acquainted with a soul in Sienna whom I could ask to be my second. Knowing perfectly well that a strong animosity against the Germans existed even in parts of Italy not under their control, I determined to ask the advice of my Italian acquaintances who were following me. I told them of the conversation which had taken place (of which, by the by, they seemed perfectly aware), and that as I had no

one to be my second, would they advise me what to do. After a moment's silence the younger of the two said to me,

"If you will accept my services I shall be happy to offer them. There is my address, and as soon as you hear from the Count, you may forward it to him."

I thanked him for his offer, and we then parted.

The next day the Count sent a friend, a French officer, to call on me, and as in duty bound I referred him to Captain Marchioni, my acquaintance of the evening before. The following morning Marchioni called on me, with a remarkably serious expression of countenance.

"It has been arranged," he said, "that you meet the Count at daybreak to-morrow at a spot agreed on outside the walls. But let me ask you if you are a good swordsman, for I will not disguise the fact from you that the Count is most expert with the sabre, the weapon with which the affair is to be decided. Beyond that, he is a notorious bully, and has already been engaged in several disputes of the kind."

I merely remarked that I understood something of the use of the sabre, and was perfectly

ready to meet the Count at the time stated. Captain Marchioni then asked if I had a sabre, as he had one perfectly applicable to the occasion, which he would bring with him when he called for me in the morning, and he then took his leave The idea immediately arose in my mind how often does a faculty or object we possess, which may be considered useless, turn out when least expected to be of great value. It was so with me in the present case. Without any other earthly stimulus than that of mere bodily exercise, I had assiduously studied fencing—the sabre especially—in Milan. And now it appeared that this accomplishment which I had thought useless might probably stand me in good stead.

The next morning, at daybreak, Captain Marchioni, bringing with him the sabre, called on me, and we proceeded together to a field outside the town. We found the Count and his friend awaiting us, as well as the surgeon of the theatre, whom Marchioni had requested to be present on the occasion. We saluted each other coolly, and I could not help perceiving a certain sort of self-satisfied sneer on the countenance of my adversary, as if he were certain of victory.

After taking off our coats and waistcoats, the sabres were placed in our hands. These were light, but formidable looking weapons, with the upper portion sharpened as fine as a razor, such as were principally used in encounters of the kind, and differing from the ordinary heavy cavalry sabre. Before the signal to commence was given, the Count, sneering at me the while, placed his left arm behind him, and performed with the sabre a series of cuts in the shape of the figure eight, holding his wrist at the time about level with his eye, and without moving it from that position, ostensibly to exercise the muscles of the wrist, but evidently to give me a fore-warning of his skill in the use of the weapon. When he had concluded, I went through the same manœuvre, and with so much efficiency and rapidity, that I heard the Frenchman whisper to my second, "My Austrian friend, I see, has found his match." Even the Count himself, it struck me, looked more serious, though in no manner whatever alarmed, merely the sort of expression a man would assume who, without fearing him, had found his adversary quite as formidable as himself.

We now commenced in real earnest. I will not

detain the reader by giving any very minute description of the affray. For the first five minutes we stood opposite each other, each displaying, I may say, without vanity, considerable skill. The seconds now interfered, saying that as honour was perfectly satisfied, we had better make friends. The Count said he was perfectly ready to do so if I would apologise for the language I made use of two evenings before; but my blood being up, I told him I did not come there to apologise, but to fight, and that he might quit the field if he pleased, but I should not be the first to do so. Of course, my remark left no alternative, and we commenced again, when after a few minutes I received a sharp blow on the right shoulder from the Count's sabre, at the same time inflicting across his face a serious gash with mine.

The seconds now declared the affair terminated. The Count, who was far more seriously wounded than I was, remained in the hands of the surgeon, and I, accompanied by Marchioni, returned to my hotel, he complimenting me highly on the skill I had shown in the combat.

An hour after my arrival in the hotel, the

surgeon of the theatre, who had seen the Count borne to his lodgings, and had bound up his wounds, came to dress mine. I was much pleased to see him, for to say the truth my shoulder was paining me considerably, and I did not like to send for another surgeon, as it was imprudent to allow the affair to be known by too many people, lest the police authorities might interfere. The surgeon when he saw my wound told me, that although there was not the slightest danger, it would take possibly some weeks before I could conveniently travel.

"At the same time," he continued, "your wound is trifling when compared with that of the Count. He is fearfully disfigured for life, and from all I hear of his character, he has at last met with his deserts."

To say the truth, I had very little pride in the termination of the affair. The sorrow I felt at seeing the fearful gash, the moment after I had made it, across the handsome face of the young fellow weighed on my conscience, though why I know not. I was certainly the party challenged, and whatever my other faults may be, I am not of a quarrelsome disposition. When engaged in any dispute I have always

had before me the advice of old Polonius to his son—

> Beware
> Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in
> Bear 't that the opposed may beware of thee.

Inflammatory symptoms having occurred in my wound, I remained indoors for several days. When better I wrote an account to my friend Tassani of the whole transaction. Moreover, I told him that as it was my intention to pass through Milan on my road to Germany, I should like to know whether he considered my affair with the Count would be likely to bring me into any trouble with the Milanese authorities, for, if so, I must take some other route northwards. I also gave him a somewhat detailed account of the young actress who had pleased me so much, and whom I had determined to visit at Lucca, that I might have the pleasure of seeing her once more before quitting Italy, perhaps for ever. A few days afterwards I received Tassani's reply. This was to the effect that the Count had greatly displeased the Austrian government, and that I had nothing to fear from them in the matter, so that I could return

through Milan if I pleased, without any interference from the police authorities. He also told me that the actress with whom I had been so much fascinated was no other than his cousin Clelia, of whom he had so frequently spoken to me, my ignorance of the fact evidently having arisen from the practice common in Italy of dropping the family name when entering the theatrical profession. He further stated that he had already written to his cousin an account of my quarrel and duel with the German Count, and that I intended to call on her as I passed through Lucca.

CHAPTER XVII.

LUCCA AND PAVIA.

I COMMENCE the present chapter under a feeling of great difficulty. I wish to describe the pathetic, nor can I bring to my mind any element in it which at all approaches the ridiculous, with one solitary exception—the apparent absurdity which in every case must arise when a grey-headed man, thoroughly tired of the world, attempts to describe a love episode which occurred to him in his younger days. I would willingly omit the description altogether, but for a singular effect which attended it, and which has not left me even to the present day, bringing with it every circumstance connected with the case as vividly as the moment after this took place.

About a week after the reception of Tassani's letter my surgeon told me my wound was sufficiently healed to allow me to travel, provided I did not over fatigue myself. I received the

intelligence with great satisfaction, my wish to see the fair tragedian again having become considerably stronger since I had discovered that she was the cousin of whom Tassani had so frequently spoken. Nay, more, my wish to behold her again appeared to become accumulative, increasing daily in strength, and that to such an extent, that the same afternoon I had received the surgeon's consent to my journey, wearing my arm in a sling, I left Sienna, and proceeded on my way to Lucca, where I arrived about a week afterwards, having been obliged to stay a few days in Florence in consequence of inflammatory symptoms again making their appearance in the wound.

On arriving at Lucca, and before unpacking my luggage, I inquired of the waiter at the inn what theatres were open. He told me he was not certain whether any performances were going on at that time, but that he would inquire. Presently he returned to the room, bringing with him a printed placard stating that the Signora Casanboni (the theatrical name Tassani's cousin had assumed), being recovered from her late severe indisposition, would make her appearance again that evening in her favourite character of

Giovanna d'Arco. I immediately sent the waiter to procure me a box at the theatre, and then sat down to my dinner. Of appetite, however, I had none; my wound pained me exceedingly, and the state of anxiety I was in to witness the performance made every morsel I placed in my mouth utterly tasteless to me, till at last, in despair, I threw the knife and fork on the table, and descending to the café in front of the inn, occupied myself in reading the old newspapers, till it was time for the performances at the theatre to commence.

The box selected for me was an excellent one on the first tier, but a short distance from the stage, and I there waited anxiously for the Casanboni to make her appearance. I think she could not have been on the stage more than two minutes before she evidently recognised me—the recognition, by the way, being far easier on her part from the sling which sustained my wounded arm. I think I even detected on more than one occasion an expression of sympathy on her countenance when she looked at my box, but of that possibly I may have been mistaken. That evening she played her part admirably. Not a word was forced, nor a syllable lost to the

audience. In fact, the idea occurred to me that Tassani had informed her of the complimentary manner I had spoken in my letter of her articulation, and that she felt determined to keep up the impression she had made.

The next day I called on her at her lodgings, and found both Clelia and her mother at home. The latter was a stout, good-natured looking woman, with that total absence of waist which is so frequently noticed in Italian women at her time of life. Her daughter lost nothing of her beauty by being seen in daylight—a somewhat uncommon quality with actresses in general, especially those in the south of Europe. Apart from the great beauty of her countenance, she had at the time another attraction, or, at least, an attribute which strongly raised my sympathy—she was evidently in delicate health, and although my medical knowledge was of the slightest possible description, I had no difficulty in believing the statement made by my acquaintance in the pit of the theatre at Sienna, that she was consumptive, was but too true. In her manner she was perfectly ladylike, frank and cordial. Had she been a lady in the highest grade of society, receiving a guest whom

she wished to make welcome, she could not have done so in a more dignified yet natural manner. Her mother thanked me warmly for the way in which I had taken up the insult offered to her daughter in Sienna, and concluded her thanks in the exuberant terms so commonly used by Italian women when expressing their gratitude or admiration. Her daughter said nothing, maintaining, during the time, a calm, quiet expression of countenance, yet it struck me she more than once glanced sympathetically at my wounded arm.

We conversed for some time on theatrical affairs, the Lucca public, their appreciation of dramatic talent, and other cognate matters. In the course of conversation I told her I had seen in the bills, the day before, that she had been indisposed, and I trusted it had been nothing serious. She said it was nothing of any consequence, and that it had soon passed off; at the same time, the expression of her mother's countenance, although she said nothing, seemed emphatically to contradict her. They asked me how long I intended to remain in Lucca, and I told them, probably a fortnight, giving, as an excuse (not altogether untruthful), that on

account of the accident I had received in my arm it pained me exceedingly, and I should feel obliged if they would recommend me a doctor who could attend me. Of course they mentioned the one attached to the theatre, and after thanking them for the reception they had given me, I took my leave.

The same afternoon the surgeon of the theatre called on me, and dressed my wound. During the time he was with me I asked him what had been the illness of the Casanboni. He told me she had been attacked with a violent spitting of blood, which at first he had reason to think very seriously of, but he was glad to say it at length subsided.

"After all," he continued, "that poor girl is not fit for her profession. That she is very talented there is no doubt, and she may go on well for some time longer, but, in the end, mark my words, she will break down. It will, indeed, be a pity, for a more amiable girl I have never met with on the stage, and in mind she is far above her profession."

Clelia, however, seemed of a different opinion, and so far from appearing to have any dislike to her profession, it would have been difficult to

select one better adapted to her mind—that is to say, as far as tragedy was concerned. She was not only of a very poetical temperament, but I saw several specimens of her verses which showed she possessed considerable talent as a writer, which, if fully developed, might have made her celebrated. I think hardly a day passed without my calling at the house, and spending some time with her and her mother. Beyond that she was an excellent parent, I saw but little to admire in the latter. With the daughter, on the contrary, my admiration increased daily, till at last it settled down into positive love, and that love of a most passionate character. I had not, indeed, imagined myself capable of entertaining so strong an attachment. Nor was it unreturned, for I believe—in fact, I am certain—that Clelia entertained for me as warm an affection as I did for her. The mother, as is generally the case with the mothers of Italian actresses, was not much consulted on the occasion, and left her daughter to follow her own inclination. The question now arose whether Clelia should leave the stage, or continue in the theatrical profession. And here a singular difficulty presented itself. That her strength

was not equal to the duties of her profession was but too apparent to her mother. Still there was the stern necessity before them of parent or child earning money. The daughter, partly from love of her profession, partly from the necessity already alluded to, evidently considered her strength was greater than it really was, and she was determined to continue on the stage. The offer of marriage I had made her could not at the time be accepted, although I am fully convinced she loved me fondly, but both her mother and herself being rigid Catholics, she could not marry a Protestant without a dispensation from the Pope. They even went so far as to consult a priest on the occasion, who, possibly from mercenary motives of his own, as he would have been employed in the matter, put forth some formal objections to the marriage, though adding at the same time that he had no doubt in a few months' time the dispensation would be obtained. I must say the delay did not appear to me as objectionable as might be thought, certainly not at the commencement of our intimacy. The fact was that the way she was received by the public, and the effect she produced was most gratifying to me, and annulled

to a considerable extent the pain I should otherwise have felt. However, the commission to obtain the dispensation was placed in the hands of the priest, and Clelia, in the meantime, continued her profession.

All my old love for the theatre had now returned to me, and I not only attended every performance, but every rehearsal as well, my love totally closing my eyes to many objectionable features, bickerings and jealousies, which from time to time developed themselves in the company. I even went so far as to entertain the idea of becoming an *impresario* myself, and mentioned the subject to Clelia and her mother. At first they attempted to dissuade me, telling me I little knew the inconvenience and anxieties attending the life of the manager of a tragedy company in Italy. I argued on, however, and at last they gave way, and it was agreed that as soon as Clelia's engagement at Lucca had terminated we should return to Milan, and there make arrangements to put my proposition into practice. Clelia proposed that on our way we should stop at Pavia, as she had heard there would be a theatre to let there in the course of two or three months, and if she found it was

not too large for her voice—and she had been given to understand it was not—we could make that our first speculation. This was agreed on, and after I had written to my uncle, telling him of my determination, and requesting him to send me, beyond my quarter's allowance, some three or four hundred pounds more to Milan, to be ready there on my arrival, I remained quietly at Lucca till Clelia had finished her engagement, making myself master, the while, of the different duties of a manager. I would willingly dwell much longer on my sojourn in Lucca, for without any comparison it was the happiest time of my life. The more I saw of my betrothed the more beautiful did she appear to me, and I am fully convinced her attachment was as ardent as my own.

Clelia's Lucca engagement had now expired, and we hired a *vetturino* and proceeded towards Pavia, where we arrived without anything worthy of remark. The following day, on descending to breakfast, I was met by Madame Tassani, who, with a terrified expression of countenance, gave me the painful intelligence that her daughter in the night had had a return of the old complaint of spitting of blood, and to such

an extent as even to alarm the doctor whom they had sent for. It may easily be imagined that my anxiety was at the highest. Before evening, however, the symptoms had considerably abated, but only to break out with increased violence the next day. I questioned the doctor, who told me there was no doubt his poor patient was very ill; in fact, judging from the bright scarlet colour of the blood, and its quantity, she might be said to be in considerable danger. He gave me permission to see her, but under the express condition that no conversation passed between us, as she must be kept as quiet and emotionless as possible. I promised I would obey his instructions to the letter, and Madame Tassani then conducted me into her daughter's bedroom. I faithfully followed the promise I had made the doctor, as far as maintaining silence was concerned, but the pallid countenance and colourless lips of my betrothed told so plainly the danger she was in, that placing my hands over my face, and then burying them in the bedclothes, I burst into an uncontrollable flood of tears. Madame Tassani attempted to console me, and Clelia, taking my hand in hers, entreated me, in a low voice, to be calm. The pressure of her hand,

however, had a totally different effect. It was hot and dry, and even now can I remember, as I pressed it, how plainly I could feel the beatings of the arteries in it. Clelia now became as distressed as I was, and her mother led me from the room. During the rest of the day I remained in a state of intense anxiety. To my inquiries, I found the disease continued without any sign of diminution, till at last I so much dreaded the answer that I asked no more.

The following day Clelia was somewhat better; but the physician, who had received an account of the scene the previous day, requested me not to go into the poor girl's room, and though sorely against my inclination, I was obliged to admit the justice of his prohibition. Clelia continued to improve daily, and at the end of a fortnight she was able to leave her room. In fact, so rapidly did she get better that, my wish, possibly being father to the thought, I came to the conclusion that all danger was over. I questioned the physician closely on the subject, who told me he sincerely hoped I might be right, and although he did not at present see any symptoms of a return of an unfavourable character, she was far too weak to undertake the

journey to Milan, and that she had better remain in Pavia till her health was fully restored. I could not shut my eyes to the strength of his argument, and after consulting with Madame Tassani and her daughter, it was agreed that as my purse was getting very low, I should leave them and proceed to Milan, where I expected to find the remittance from my uncle.

On arriving at Milan, to my great disappointment I found no letter from my uncle, nor any credit at the banker's, and was somewhat puzzled what to do. I determined to remain a week longer in Milan to wait for my money, and dispatched a letter to Clelia informing her of my determination. In reply she told me not to make myself at all uneasy as they had sufficient funds to pay current expenses. She gave me very pleasing accounts of her health, saying she had so far recovered that she hoped in a fortnight's time, at the longest, to be able to start for Milan, so that I could remain there, if I pleased, till her arrival. The week passed on, and no money came, and I was completely at low water mark. I mentioned the circumstance to my friend Mr. X——, the engineer, who kindly volunteered to be my banker, and gave

me on the spot twenty-five napoleons, saying I could repay him when my remittance arrived, and with this money in my pocket I set out in high spirits for Pavia.

It was late in the evening when I arrived, and having left the diligence office, I proceeded on foot to the inn at which I had left Clelia and her mother. Oh! how well I remember every circumstance connected with that night. It was calm, warm, and beautiful, the sky perfectly clear, and the moon shining brightly. I think all Pavia seemed that evening to be in the streets, and the cafés, both inside and out, were crowded, while street musicians, all more or less out of tune, were playing to the customers who were seated at the tables. The streets through which I passed presented so gay an appearance that my spirits seemed lightened of a considerable portion of the painful anxiety that had lately oppressed them, and I continued my road onwards with an elasticity both of mind and body to which for a long time I had been a stranger. At length I reached the café which formed the angle of the street in which the hotel that Clelia and her mother resided in was situated. The

café at the time was brilliantly lighted, and besides the tables, both inside the house and out, being fully occupied, principally by students, a considerable crowd had collected to hear a tall, showily-dressed woman with a really good contralto voice singing an air then much in vogue in Italy from Ricci's opera of *Scaramuccia*, accompanied by a man beside her on a guitar. The air itself was well sung, but the words of the refrain, "*Oggi qua, Oggi qua domani la*," were given with excellent emphasis and effect.

When the air was concluded a little girl about thirteen years of age who was with them went round the tables and outside spectators with a small tin waiter for contributions, which were given with considerable liberality. Hitherto I had remained in the rear of the spectators, but an impression had crossed my mind that the singer's voice strongly resembled that of the Grandolfi's, still I could not imagine she could have been reduced to so low an ebb of fortune as to have become a common street singer. It turned out, however, to be a fact. After the girl who accompanied her had made the round of the spectators, a general cry arose from them for her to repeat the air. In

bowing around to the audience to signify that she willingly obeyed them I got a full and perfect view of her countenance, and all doubt vanished—it was no other than my old friend Grandolfi's.

Wishing to make myself known to her, I attempted to push my way through the crowd to reach her, but the feat was impossible, no one would make room for me. I then resolved to wait till she had finished her air, and then ask her after the health of her Babbo—for in the letter most gratefully worded she had sent to me to Florence, acknowledging the receipt of the money, she stated that his health was fast failing him. And then the idea crossed my mind that being so great a favourite in Pavia, I should meet her again, I turned away, the refrain which she had just sung, "*Oggi qua, Oggi qua domani la,*"* ringing in my ears as I went.

I now entered the gate of the hotel in which Clelia resided, and without any apparent cause, café, spectators, lights, singer, all in a moment faded from my memory, yet not a soul was in the vestibule at the time. And then I heard a

* Here to-day, there to-morrow.

noise of many feet over head, and presently that of a number of persons descending the staircase. They consisted principally of a crowd of decently dressed women, evidently not customers of the inn, and following them a sacristan carrying a cross, who in his turn was followed by a priest, the whole terminating by several idlers. I stared in utter astonishment at the scene. A feeling of terror came over me, without my being able to define exactly the cause. I knew that extreme unction had been administered to some dying person, but Clelia's letter had told me she had fully recovered. A waiter then came near me who could have given me precise information, but somehow I dreaded to put a question to him on the subject. With no particular motive I turned my head from him and was proceeding upstairs, when I looked back, and noticed the man, with a serious expression of countenance, watching me attentively. Almost mechanically I asked him what patient the priest had been visiting?

"Your friend, the poor young lady, sir," he replied; "I fear she is dying."

When I look back, even in the present day, on this painful episode of my life, all comes as vividly before me as at the moment it occurred.

I find myself in Clelia's chamber, standing one side of her bed, her mother on the other. There I remained hour after hour, holding her hand in mine, watching her as she sank gently, as if "withering leaf by leaf," till the dawn arose in the heavens, when she tried to raise her head from the pillow as if she wished to speak to me. I bent forward to catch her words, but before she could utter them her head sank back again, a slight bluish tint spread over her countenance, which in its turn vanished, to be succeeded by a pure white marble hue, and the girl I had loved so fondly was no more.

It would be impossible to describe my state of mind when I recognised my loss. I attended the funeral, after which Madame Tassani told me it was her intention to return to the south of Italy, where she had relations with whom she could reside, and I then bade her adieu, and returned to Milan. Of what took place on the journey I entirely forget, with one solitary exception, and that was the words of the Grandolfi's song, " *Oggi qua, Oggi qua domani la,*" kept perpetually passing through my mind. And this was the more distressing to me from the contrast I could not help drawing between the boisterous,

merry scene in front of the café, and its rapid change to the death-bed of my poor girl. Even after I had arrived in Milan the words did not vanish from my mind, but were continually recurring to me, till at last they almost drove me distracted. They were even ringing in my ears when I called at the post-office and banker's, and was informed that there were neither letters nor remittance for me; and if when I first heard them in Pavia they might be considered to have carried with them a prophetic warning, in the present instance they were scarcely less ominous, though to a less terrible degree.

My friend, Mr. X——, now arrived in Milan from his factory at Ponte, in the Pian d'Erba. He had already heard of my loss, which he assured me had grieved him deeply. Having noticed the extreme pallor of my countenance, he said to me,

"If you do not take care, you will make yourself ill. Without being a doctor I can easily perceive it from the expression of your countenance. Now take my advice, return with me to-morrow to the factory, and spend a few days in quiet, till you have somewhat recovered yourself."

I told him I would willingly do so, but that as I had not yet received my remittance, I should not like to leave Milan till it arrived, as I had a strong objection to be in debt.

"That need not deter you," he replied. "I will leave word with one of my clerks to forward your letters the moment any arrive."

I then agreed to accompany him, and the next morning we started off together.

My residence at Ponte certainly benefited me exceedingly. I roamed about the beautiful scenery in the environs, which had the effect of considerably distracting my thoughts, always being a passionate admirer of lovely landscapes. The detestable words of the song which had caused me so much annoyance had now also vanished, and my mind began to assume its regular tone. It must not be imagined, however, that I had ceased to think continually on her I had lost, on the contrary, she was perpetually recurring to my mind. One rainy day, when I was kept to the house, I went into my friend's library to search for a book, and I accidentally took up a volume of Boccaccio. On turning over the leaves my eye again fell on the story of the "Tent-maker's Wife," already men-

tioned, and how the poor fellow had by dint of continually practising, contrived to paint the exact features of the woman he had lost, and the idea suggested itself to me whether I would not again make the attempt. True, at Florence I had essayed to paint a portrait from memory, but it had singularly failed. I argued, however, that the stimulus which had inspired the Italian lover at the easel might also have the same effect on me as our cases were now somewhat parallel, and I determined to try the experiment. But an insuperable difficulty presented itself at the moment—I had neither easel, canvas, nor paints, nor were they to be obtained at Ponte, so I employed my time in recalling to recollection the features of my beloved Clelia, that when I commenced drawing on my return to Milan I should have considerably smoothed the impediments in the way. I found it a far more difficult task than I had imagined. I tried all I could to recall her features to my mind, and partially succeeded, but each time the expression was a different one. Sometimes it was at the moment of her death, sometimes when she was seated the night of her benefit before the table in the passage of the theatre at Sienna,

then again when I first introduced myself to her, and on each occasion so varied were the expressions of her countenance as completely to bewilder me as to any distinct or positive recognition of her features. Continually I attempted to arrive at a definite conclusion, but it was useless, and at last I began to despair of success.

One evening, however, when seated in the dim crepuscule in my own room, I made another attempt to conjure up her features before me—and succeeded. She stood there in the shade of the room dressed in the robe in which I had seen her the first time at the theatre when performing in the character of Giovanna d'Arco. So singular was the effect it made on me that I could have sunk on my knees before her had not a cruel reminiscence—cruel in its absurdity—passed across my mind at the moment. I remembered the scene at the mausoleum of the Capulets in Romeo and Juliet at the Carcano Theatre, when the contralto was on his knees before what he believed to be the ghost of Juliet. The thought had hardly occurred to me than the vision of Clelia vanished.

Although I was perfectly aware the phantom had simply been an illusion of my own brain, it

was so clear to me that the whole night long I tried to conjure up her form again, but without success. The following day I was still unsuccessful, and in fact, for several days afterwards. And then my mind was attracted to another subject. A courier had arrived from Milan bringing me a letter, which I hastily opened, expecting it was the notice of my money having been sent to me. To my intense surprise I found it was in an unknown handwriting, from a Mr. Gordon, a solicitor, of whom I knew nothing, informing me that my uncle had died suddenly, and that on looking into his affairs they were found to be in a most disordered condition, so much so as to necessitate my immediate return to London. Not one word was mentioned about my remittance, and indeed from the tone of the letter I had no difficulty in concluding that none had been sent.

I now appealed to my friend, Mr. X——, for advice. He told me that I ought to start off immediately for England, and that he would supply me with any money I required, and I could forward it to him at my convenience. I was most grateful to him for the offer, and accepted the sum of fifty pounds, assuring him

that with the first money I received I would repay him. Then bidding him farewell, I returned to Milan, and three days afterwards finding no hope of a remittance, I took my place in the diligence, and started for England after a sojourn of more than three years in Italy.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I RETURN TO ENGLAND.

NOTHING particularly worthy of notice occurred during my journey to England. Although the words of Mr. Gordon's letter certainly seemed somewhat mysterious, I cannot say I felt much anxiety about it, a sort of apathy or indifference to the future evidently hung over me, and I occupied myself during the journey with thinking over the circumstances which had taken place, rather than speculating on what the morrow might bring forth. This apathy, however, vanished two days after my arrival in England. I called on Mr. Gordon, the solicitor, who had written to me respecting my uncle, to ask him for further explanation concerning his affairs. He received me very kindly; but I noticed a serious expression on his countenance which rather puzzled me. It could not be any regret he had for my uncle, for he was by no means a

loveable character, nor was I even aware that he was acquainted with him, although that might certainly have been the case, for, as I before stated, my uncle was by no means of a communicative disposition. Mr. Gordon opened the conversation.

"I am sorry to say I have very bad news for you. I must first tell you that it is more than suspected your uncle died by his own hand, in fact, that he took poison; but as the coroner's inquest brought in a verdict that he had died from natural causes, we have no right to dispute the wisdom of their decision. I was aware that your uncle's affairs were in a somewhat embarrassed condition long before his death, but I had no idea they were in the lamentable state of confusion—and I use that word as the mildest that occurs as being applicable to the case—I found them in. In fact, my friend, without further circumlocution, I may as well tell you the truth at once. Not only did your uncle die insolvent, but many of the securities he held as belonging to you were utterly valueless, and he had transferred bad securities of his own, while those that were really good he had sold, forging your name to the transfers."

"But you surely must be mistaken," I said, aghast.

"I most sincerely wish that you could prove to me that I were," replied Mr. Gordon. "I assure you, nothing would give me greater pleasure; but unhappily, in my mind, there is not the slightest doubt on the occasion, and I am fully convinced that when you have gone through his affairs, you will be of the same opinion. However, I cannot speak more on the subject to-day. Call on me to-morrow about this time, and we will go more at length into the matter."

How I left him I know not. My mind seemed perfectly crushed with the intelligence I had received. I endeavoured to collect my thoughts as I walked homewards, but they were in such a state of complete bewilderment, it was useless. At last I determined to put off entertaining the subject further till evening, and then with a calmer mind deliberate over my situation.

When evening came my frame of mind was in no better condition to consider the matter than it was at the moment I quitted Mr. Gordon's office. Possibly it might have been

even worse, for to the shock the news had occasioned me was added a gloomy feeling which gradually approached almost to despair. Hour after hour I sat in the easy chair in my lodgings, the room dimly lighted by a powerless lamp on the table, trying to trace out some course for the future, but none could I satisfactorily arrive at. I could not dig, to beg I was ashamed! I successively turned over in my mind whether it would be possible to earn a living as an usher in a school, but my mind revolted at the idea. I then thought I might make a good merchant's clerk, as my knowledge of the French and Italian languages might be of great use to me. I remembered, however, that these were situations of trust, and even if I heard of a vacancy, I had no one to offer as a reference. Several other occupations occurred to me, all of which I successively rejected. The only two which promised any probability of success were as a lawyer's clerk, if Mr. Gordon would interest himself in my behalf, and even then my handwriting was so bad I was hardly adapted for the occupation; or to enter a light cavalry regiment, where, with my knowledge of the sabre, I might in time arrive at the grade of fencing-master.

And then I remembered the debt that I was under to my friend X—— in Milan, and how impossible it would be for me to economise sufficient to pay it off out of the trifling sums I should receive in either of these occupations.

The remembrance of this debt occasioned me great sorrow. That up to the present time I had led a wandering, idle life and a punishment was due to me was true; but the most painful portion of it was my present inability to pay off this debt. I had always through life conceived the idea that to incur a debt I was not certain of being able to pay was little better than a direct robbery, and that opinion has never left me. When I borrowed the money I certainly had not the most remote idea that my uncle's affairs were in such a deplorable condition, or I would sooner have made my way on foot to Calais and have worked my way over than have done so. At last the tears fairly came into my eyes, so miserable did I feel. My thoughts then turned on Clelia as upon a refuge where I could find comfort and consolation in my misfortune. With my mind strongly centred on her, I suddenly perceived her standing before me in the same position she had

appeared to me at Ponte. So perfect was it that I could not only distinguish the sweet expression of her countenance, but every fold of the white dress she wore. Her identity was so real, that I rose from my chair as if to advance towards her, but in an instant she had vanished. I again seated myself, and endeavoured to conjure up the phantom, but without any effect. It would be difficult to express the great consolation I felt at the moment in the power my mind had acquired in being able to bring her form before me. Of course I was perfectly well aware it was merely the creation of my own brain, perfected by the intense love I bore her, and not any ghostly appearance. My mind had, however, positively recovered its tone from the appearance of my self-created phantom, and I determined I would apply the next morning to Mr Gordon to procure me a situation, and if he succeeded I would make a point of putting by a certain portion of the money I received each week towards the payment of the debt I had incurred in Milan.

The next morning I called on Mr. Gordon at the time mentioned, and with him examined my uncle's books and papers. I will not weary the

reader with a description of the investigation. Suffice it to say, it only tended to confirm me in the conclusion I had arrived at the previous day, that I was utterly penniless. When the business portion of our interview was concluded, he asked me what course I intended to pursue, and whether I was adapted for any profession. I told him candidly there were but two occupations I could think of. One, that of a lawyer's clerk, for although my handwriting was certainly indifferent, with practice I could improve it; the other, to enlist as a private soldier in a light cavalry regiment, and see if I could work my way on. I told him I was possessed of considerable strength and agility, that I was an expert swordsman, was not lacking in animal courage, and although the education I had received was better than would be required for an occupation of the kind, it might in time of need stand me in good stead. Mr. Gordon listened calmly to my two projects, and then said:

"I would not advise you to adopt either of the occupations you have named. In the first place, as a copying clerk your pay would be of the smallest, and the drudgery great. As a soldier you might succeed better; but remember,

even if you rose in the profession, it would be many years—no matter what ability you possess—before you would have the remotest chance of being a commissioned officer. I should say there was not even the least chance of it, for should you by courage, perseverance, and skill, be brought under the notice of some influential superior officer, you have no money to meet the expenses of a regiment, and to pass your life among uneducated men, with whom you would be obliged to associate, would be painful to you indeed. Now try something else."

"Could you suggest anything to me?" I asked.

"Frankly I cannot," was his reply. "But if I were you I would apply to your uncle's cousins, the brothers Wardrop, whose acquaintance, after many years of family disputes, he renewed about three years ago. It is true there was not even then much love between them and your uncle, still they were on speaking terms, and civil enough to each other. Indeed, one of them called here the day before you arrived in England, and when I told him the hopeless state of your affairs, he expressed strong sympathy for your loss, and from his tone and manner he evidently

meant it, and he is not a gentleman to exhibit much feeling, although his temperament is somewhat different from that of your late uncle's."

"But I never even heard of his name," I remarked. "How can I then apply to him? He would take it as a liberty."

"No fear of that," said Mr. Gordon. "He is a very good fellow at heart, although you may find him not particularly demonstrative when you first see him."

"Well, tell me a little more about them, as I ought to know something of the family before I call," I said.

"They are two brothers," he replied, "and both characters in their way, though certainly two very good fellows. They do not in the least resemble each other in either mind or personal appearance. One is short and stout, with a keen, shrewd expression of countenance; the other tall, thin, and with a countenance not lacking in ability, or it would have been very deceptive, for he is a very clever man, and has, moreover, a certain mild, amiable manner which contrasts somewhat strangely with the cynical expression noticeable in his brother's features."

"What are their occupations?" I asked.

"The one who called here the other day, and the most likely to assist you," he replied, "was educated as a barrister, and was really a good lawyer, with great fluency of speech. The first case he had, however, completely disgusted him with the profession. He had to defend a man who had been accused of a most cruel robbery, by which he had ruined a poor widow and family; but by Wardrop's eloquence and tact, not only did he get the scoundrel off, but the verdict left him in possession of his ill-gotten gains, while the poor woman and her children were reduced to a point little, if anything, above starvation. The result was that Mr. Edward Wardrop was so disgusted with his success that he quitted the profession, and turned law reporter for a newspaper. From that he has arrived at the post of sub-editor of one of the principal Sunday papers, from which he derives a very respectable and fair income. You will find him when you know him a very amusing character, full of information, good-hearted enough in reality, but cynical to a greater extent than I have ever met with anyone before. Moreover, he is an old bachelor, and professes to hold all womankind in contempt. The other brother, Dr. George

Wardrop, was formerly surgeon in the East India Company's service. He quitted it, however, and taking to himself a wife, entered into private practice. The couple lived happily together for three years, he succeeding in his profession moderately well. His wife then died in childbed and the baby with her. The expenses of the funeral, and some money he had lost, made him give up his house, and he accepted an appointment as parish surgeon in some poor neighbourhood in Westminster, where I understand he has a small dispensary. He is a very kind, amiable, and intelligent man, nearly as eccentric as his brother, though, as I said before, in a different way. One of the most remarkable features about them is, that differing as much as they do in temperament and ideas, it would be difficult to find two human beings who had a greater affection for each other. I understand they meet only once a fortnight, but that with a regularity that clock-work could not surpass. However, in a short time I have no doubt you will know them better for yourself. Be not cast down if the editor, whose address I now give you, receives you somewhat coldly or snappishly at first. It is but an assumed manner,

and will certainly wear off after you have seen him once or twice."

Mr. Gordon then gave me Mr. Wardrop's address, and I left his office to call on the sub-editor, and fortunately was informed he was within. On sending up my name I must say I waited somewhat anxiously to know the result, as well as curious to see that mysterious individual an editor *in propriâ personâ* in the very locality in which he prepared his thunderbolts. To say the truth, the organisation of a newspaper was, up to that moment, as complete a mystery to me as was the theatre in my boyish days when I witnessed with so much satisfaction and excitement the "Dog of Montargis; or the Forest of Bondy." I may almost say that when on being ushered into the sanctum of the editor I saw the common ink-spotted furniture of the room, its disorderly condition, with papers scattered all over it without apparent order or regularity, my illusion was nearly as completely dispelled as it was in the case of the faithful dog when I found that instead of seizing the bell handle to inform the inhabitants of the house of his master's murder, he was merely tugging at a sausage tied at the end of a

string. Even the appearance of the editor himself somewhat disappointed me. From my preconceived opinion I had expected to find him a fashionably dressed man with considerable dignity of manner. I found him, on the contrary, even shorter than I had imagined him to be from the description Mr. Gordon had given of him, and considerably stouter. At the same time I must acknowledge I felt something like awe in his presence, and that solely from his extraordinarily intelligent countenance, and penetrating, though not ill-natured, glance when he looked at me. The expression on his features was that of considerable good humour, mixed with intense shrewdness. His eyebrows were somewhat shaggy; his forehead remarkably handsome, advertising truly that its owner was a man of great ability. His dress was slovenly, and would have been so in the extreme had it not been for the scrupulous whiteness of his shirt and wristbands, and from the manner in which his waistcoat was thrown open he seemed to take a pride in displaying it. The reception he gave me was different from what I had been led to expect. He shook my hand in a most friendly manner, and after

requesting me to be seated commenced the conversation.

"I am truly grieved," he said, "to hear of the disordered state of your uncle's affairs, to speak of them in the mildest manner. We were never very intimate, and to say the truth, I had not much respect for him. I knew him to be an inveterate gambler, and that he was frequently short of money; but I had no idea his passion for gambling had been mixed up with positive dishonesty, and of which you have been the principal sufferer. I told Gordon to let me know of your arrival, and to invite you to call on me. I don't wish to ask any indiscreet questions, but, thinking perhaps from the life you have been leading you might be somewhat embarrassed what course to take, if I can advise or assist you in any manner I will do so. But, clearly understand me, I am not a rich man, and whatever I do must be rather to help you to help yourself than to afford you any considerable pecuniary assistance. Now, let me know—that is to say, if you have no objection to tell me—what are your prospects."

I told him candidly they were of the most gloomy description. What to do I did not

know. Mr. Gordon had assured me, I said, that I could not gain a livelihood as a law clerk, and by enlisting in a light cavalry regiment I should never be able to pay off the debt of fifty pounds owing to a friend in Milan, and it was necessary I should look out for some other occupation. If he could point out any to me, I told him, I should consider it a great favour.

"First, with regard to your debt of fifty pounds, my lad," said Mr. Wardrop. "I told you I was not a rich man, but if the sum of fifty pounds will be of any use to you I will let you have it with great pleasure."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," I said.

"Stop," said Mr. Wardrop, interrupting me, "call me uncle for the future."

I bowed, and continued,

"I am much obliged to you, uncle, for your kind offer, but I will decline it, for it would merely be transferring a debt from one person to another. The gentleman to whom I owe the money in Milan is a man of fortune, and will, I am sure, not have the slightest objection to wait. All I wish to do is to be able to earn money enough to pay the debt from my own earnings."

"I rather like that idea, my boy," he said. "And now, what can you do?"

"Frankly, uncle, I don't know," I replied.

"You have had a good education, Gordon tells me," he said.

"Fully up to the average; I claim no more," I said. "This, however, I may state without boasting, that I am a good French and Italian scholar, and can correspond fluently in either language."

"Well, that is already something," he said. "Now, do you think if I got you some newspaper reporting you could do it?"

"I am afraid not," I replied, "for I have had no experience in it whatever."

"That it requires practice is certain; but make a trial," he said. "For example, do you know anything about the theatres?"

I told him I thought I knew more of theatrical matters than anything else.

"Do you understand music and singing sufficiently well to criticise them?" he asked.

"I think so," I replied.

"Well then, let me see what you can do in that way," he said. "Understand me, I am not going to give you a commission; but just draft out

for me a notice of an opera that you can imagine you have seen. I will give you one or two copies of the *Times* newspaper for the phraseology, and you must imitate the style as much as you can, you cannot have better models. Come to me again the day after to-morrow, and let me see what it is like. Now, good bye, for I am busy. If I can be of any use to you, let me know."

I took the copies of the *Times* with me, and bringing to mind the opera of the "Gazza Ladra" which I had seen in Milan, I wrote a notice of it, imitating the style of phraseology as much as I could of the two models my uncle had given me, and I took it to him on the day appointed. He looked over it with great care, and complimented me on the manner I had performed my task, though in by no means exuberant terms, and he then pointed out some defects in the composition.

"At the same time," he continued, "I admit that there is considerable promise in your performance, so much so, in fact, that I will give you a commission to report the new ballet to be brought out at the Italian Opera House on Tuesday next. Let me see what you can make

of it. Whether I use it or not you shall be paid for it."

It would be difficult to explain my feelings of satisfaction when I quitted the office of the ——. I had now before me the prospect of earning some money—a thing I had not done before in my life. Beyond that, there was a good prospect of my obtaining an appointment as theatrical reporter, and it was difficult to imagine anything that would agree better with my taste. And then I remembered my old friend Lefevre, who had formerly been a ballet master, and I determined to call at the Opera House, and find if he were in England. As I resolved to do my work conscientiously, he would be of immense use to me in explaining points worthy of notice, so that I might compliment those who really deserved it.

I called at the theatre, and was well pleased at finding Lefevre was in England. I obtained his address, and on going there the next morning found him just leaving his lodgings to proceed to the theatre. He appeared delighted to see me, and when I told him my principal reason for calling, he volunteered to assist me in every way in his power, and that I might begin to

understand the subject at once, he invited me to accompany him to the theatre,—an offer I willingly accepted.

I will not detain the reader with any account of the rehearsal. Lefevre, seated by me in the pit, gave me to understand the principal subjects I ought to notice, the good qualities in some of the dancers, and advising me to omit as much as possible the bad qualities in others. I asked him after my old acquaintance Frasi, and whether she was still engaged at the theatre.

"There you see her on the stage in the second row of the coryphées," he replied. "The fact is she has got very fat, and was never a light dancer, her heaviness is now so great, she would never have been continued in the company had it not been for the patronage of an English admirer of the Walmoden school among the subscribers."

I remained chatting with Lefevre till the rehearsal was over, and then going back to my lodgings, I sat down at my table, and began from the models Mr. Wardrop had given me to write criticisms on imaginary operas and ballets, and other theatrical performances.

The night for the new ballet arrived, and I attended the representation, and the next morning took my report to Mr. Wardrop. He read it through carefully, and then looking at me in a very shrewd manner, said,—

"My dear fellow, you have evidently some friend behind the scenes, for you could hardly be as well up in the subject as you are without assistance. No matter, however. Your article is well written, and shall go in. And now, take my advice as an old stager. Do not form any intimacies with people connected with the theatre. It is the most imprudent thing a young critic can do, for he is sure to make himself enemies; and very often, without really intending it, he will commit acts of injustice on those who do not really deserve it."

I promised I would follow his advice, and the next evening I reported a piece performed at one of the minor theatres, which my uncle also complimented. The following week I had the gratification to receive a letter informing me that I was taken on the staff of the paper at a salary of two guineas a week, and the sum of two guineas was enclosed for the contributions I had already sent in. I now found,

to my great joy, that I had in my hands a means not only of earning my own existence, but with time and economy of paying off my debt to my friend X——, in Milan.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PARISH SURGEON.

I CONTINUED my new duties very energetically, so much so, as to give great satisfaction to my uncle. At last I had a task given me to perform which my uncle said would test my abilities as a musical reporter. An opera, not previously performed in England, was to be brought out at the Italian Opera, and if I succeeded in reporting it scientifically, there was no doubt, I should get occasional employment on other newspapers, as really good musical reporters were not common. Fortunately for me, the opera named was the two first acts of Bellini's "I Capulletti," and the third of Vaccai's,—the same opera in which my adventure with Juliet had taken place. As I already knew every air in the opera, I had no difficulty in writing on its merits. Of the performance I could speak more distinctly when I saw it. It was neither

very good nor very bad; neither Romeo nor Juliet deserved much praise, though both were up to a very respectable level. I complimented them, however, as far as I conscientiously could do, and altogether my report was a favourable one. My uncle was much pleased with it, and introduced me to the editor of a fashionable morning paper, who afterwards gave a commission of the same kind to execute, and I now began to earn sufficient for my own personal expenses, and to put by some two or three pounds a week towards the payment of my Milanese debt.

The more I saw of my uncle, Mr. Wardrop, the more I liked him. That he was exceedingly cynical is true, and sneered at every one, but I believe a kinder hearted man never breathed. A short time after I had formed his acquaintance, he invited me to dine the following Sunday with him, saying that he would then introduce me to his brother, Dr. Wardrop, or, as he was accustomed to speak of him, "Pills." As before stated, in appearance the doctor or Pills—which for the future I shall call him, for in a short time I became so accustomed to the word, I was frequently on the point of addressing him by it

—was a tall, thin, elderly grey-haired man, with a very intelligent, yet mild expression of countenance. He received me in quite as friendly a manner as his brother had done. At this dinner, I discovered a failing in my friend and patron the editor which I had half suspected on my first introduction—that he was accustomed to drink more than was good for him. This was not to the extent of intoxication, it is true, but enough to make him exceedingly voluble, and occasionally not particularly complimentary. When contradicted in any manner, he would become very fractious, and as Pills often differed from him on subjects which turned up in course of conversation, he would get painfully irascible, and make use of language not even parliamentary. There was something exceedingly quaint and curious in the manner Pills received these attacks. He seemed to treat the ill temper of his brother much in the same manner as a good-natured nurse would the petulance of a spoilt child—allow it to wear itself out without remonstrance or rebuke. With me, on the contrary, Pills fraternised cordially. He had been in the East India Company's service, as surgeon, during the time

I was midshipman, though on a different ship, and many subjects connected with the events of that season which we had both heard of were spoken of by us. On one point we agreed admirably—we both cordially detested the service. In fact, I may say, during the years I was acquainted with Pills, I never heard him express so much aversion to anything that had displeased him, as in his opinion of the East India Company's service. One fortunate feature was noticeable in the editor, no matter what quantity he had drunk, he never attempted to contradict us as to the conclusions we had arrived respecting the defects in the Honourable Company's service. On the contrary, if Pills attempted to praise anything whatever that had occurred on other subjects, whether law, physic, or divinity, his brother was sure to contradict him, and that to a degree which proved the amiability of Pills' temper. To say the truth, I was not sorry when the evening was over, so much did I fear at last that a dispute would take place between the two brothers. Pills and I left the house together, and we had scarcely emerged into the street, when he said to me:—

"My brother is a queer fellow, isn't he? You

must have been much surprised at his behaviour, and very possibly have thought, on more than one occasion, he would have flown at my throat. He is, however, very good-natured, and much attached to me. I take no more notice of his temper than of a child's."

I told him I thought he certainly appeared very irascible, but that I had every right to hold him in respect, from the kindness I had received from him.

"With all his faults," said Pills, "I believe no human being ever had a transaction with him that had cause to regret it. But come and see me," he continued, "for I want to make your acquaintance more intimately. There is my address. I have very little to offer you in the way of attraction, but still I hope, for all that, we shall be very good friends."

Pills now left me to pursue his road homewards, and ten days afterwards I determined to pay my new-found relative a visit. I had some difficulty in finding the locality, nor could I very easily describe it to the reader, inasmuch as many alterations have since taken place in the neighbourhood of the Almonry, which have destroyed all vestiges, not only of the house, but of the

neighbourhood behind it. It was situated somewhere near the Broadway, Westminster, but in a densely crowded locality, and was a small corner house, with a red and green bottle in the window. A door by the side, on which a bell hung to give notice of any one entering, led into the dispensary, which communicated with a small back room with "Surgery" written on the window, and in which the children of the neighbourhood believed the doctor performed his amputations.

I found Pills within, and we sat down and conversed together for some time. He told me of his past troubles and present prospects, and the near chance he had had of being appointed doctor to the Grey Coat School. How the principal governors, who had voted against him, were afterwards so pleased with him that they promised him their support on any future occasion. Also how he had secured the family of the manager of a large brewery in the vicinity, in consequence of his getting one of the servants through a severe case of typhus fever; besides many other incidents of no interest to the reader. At last I asked him what sort of people inhabited the neighbourhood.

"The poorest of the poor, and among them some of the most disreputable," he replied. "And

yet, I can assure you, except for the sake of emolument, I would not change my practice for the most fashionable in London."

On this subject he dilated at considerable length, quoting many admirable instances of charity and kind feeling he had met with among them. During a short pause in our conversation, the shop-door bell rang, and a series of sharp taps was heard on the counter. Pills immediately rose, and leaving the surgery, somewhat angrily addressed the intruder with—

"What is it you want now?"

"Oh, please, sir," said the voice of a very young girl, "do come and see father, he's so bad."

"I told your mother this morning I could do nothing more for him," said Pills.

"Oh, then do send him some medicine, he's so ill," said the girl, "and I'll pay for it now."

"Why," said Pills, more good-humouredly, "your mother told me this morning she had no money to buy food; how, then, can she afford to pay for medicine?"

"Yes, but Mrs. Grey, when she saw father so bad, lent mother her flat-iron, and she got sixpence on it," said the girl. "He's so restless,

and is never quiet, and seems to find it hard to draw his breath."

"Well, then, give him this powder," said Pills, "and say I'll come and see him presently; it's a penny."

The girl laid the penny on the counter and left the shop, and Pills again entered the surgery.

I must say I was rather surprised at his taking the penny from the poor girl, but I said nothing. He, however, alluded to it himself.

"I dare say," he said, "that you are surprised at my taking the penny from that girl, but I am obliged to do so. The poor are all fond of medicine, and if I gave it gratuitously they would always be applying for it, and that I could not afford. Besides, I intend to do more than earn it, by seeing the father."

"Can you do him any good?" I asked.

"Not the slightest," replied Pills. "He is in the last stage of consumption, and will most probably not live till morning. He will take it kindly, however, of me if I call, and it will ease my conscience for accepting the penny."

"Who is he?" I inquired.

"A poor bricklayer's labourer, whose existence has been one continual punishment under

the original curse," said Pills. "The life of a negro slave on a cotton plantation must have been one of comparative luxury and idleness when compared with that my patient has gone through. In addition to his oppressive labour, he has been obliged to see his wife and six children subsisting on sixteen shillings a-week —a sufficient sum for his own food and dress having been first deducted. His wife has certainly now and then picked up another shilling; but it has always been at the risk of one of her children falling into the fire or getting run over during her absence. The amount of money he received in wages represented an equivalent in food, raiment, and lodging utterly inadequate to the support of the family, even if assisted occasionally in very bad times with half-a-crown a week and a few loaves of bread from the parish. The poor fellow's constitution, originally excellent, has sunk under it, and before to-morrow's dawn his wife will be a widow and the young children fatherless. I see you look somewhat astonished at my statement, but is nevertheless true. You can have no idea of the desperate battle of life many of our poorer orders in London have to wage. But if you are going to

dedicate your existence to newspaper work, you ought to know something about them, as occasionally you may have to write on the subject. If you have any curiosity to see the interior of a London labourer's establishment, come with me, and you will have a fair opportunity of taking this case as a type of thousands. I will pass you off as a medical man, so there will be no difficulty in the matter."

I willingly accepted the offer Pills had made me, and we started off together to the house of the bricklayer's labourer, leaving the shop in charge of a servant. As we threaded our way onward through several tortuous streets, evidently inhabited by the poorest of the population, we noticed before us a sailor so drunk that he could hardly stand, attended by a tall, gaunt woman, whose appearance and dress easily bespoke her profession. She had evidently found a victim in the sailor, and was conducting him to the sacrifice. Presently a child of about three years of age staggered from a narrow court into the street, and fell into the entrance of the road. A light cart was driving rapidly along at the time, and it appeared impossible for the child to escape being run over. The woman seeing it,

quitted the sailor, and, snatching up the child in her arms, carried it into the court, screaming out at the top of her voice for its mother, whose name I forget. It was in this court the bricklayer's labourer lived, and as we entered it we saw by the solitary gas-lamp in the centre that the child was blind. It had, moreover, hurt itself considerably by the fall, and was bleeding from the face. Pills wiped away the blood with his handkerchief, and finding no serious bruise, left the child in its mother's care. The woman who had brought it had evidently forgotten her prey in her anxiety for the welfare of the child, and as the mother entered the house she turned back again into the street, where possibly she might have found the sailor in the clutches of another of her own profession.

We now made our way up a narrow broken staircase into the front room of the house of the bricklayer's labourer. It was small, close, and wretchedly furnished. A bedstead, with a dirty torn curtain and thin, ragged bed-clothes, occupied the part facing the window. Two or three rickety chairs, a small table, a few cooking utensils, and a little crockery composed the whole furniture of the room. By the light of

a flickering candle, which seemed to burn with difficulty in the close atmosphere, we saw the dying man's family grouped around his bed. On a chair near the head sat the half wife half widow. She was sobbing bitterly. Behind her was a female neighbour making some kindly-meant attempts at consolation, though what consolation the poor creature could receive passes human ingenuity to imagine. By her side stood the eldest girl. She might have been about fourteen years of age; but sorrow, tears, and dirt had so covered her face it was impossible to say what her features were like. At the foot of the bed stood the eldest boy, apparently a year or two older than his sister. He had evidently been at some rough work during the whole of the day, with the intention of adding sixpence to the family exchequer. Near the latter stood three younger half-naked children, gazing on the dying man with countenances expressive of fear, astonishment, and sorrow combined. Behind the children stood a slatternly woman with an infant in her arms, the tears pouring down her face from pure sympathy. The side of the bed nearest the door was unoccupied; they had heard our footsteps on the stairs and had left it

clear for us. We were received with the respect the poor invariably show to the medical man. Pills advanced to the bedside, I following him. The poor man was dying; his gaunt, unwashed countenance; his chin, with its beard of many days; his sunken eyes, had all the stamp of death upon them, but the lamp of life was still flickering. As we entered he looked at us for a moment, and then turned inquiringly to his wife; the next moment his gaze was on the children at the foot of the bed. Pills, as a matter of form, felt his pulse.

"Has he taken the powder?" he asked of the girl.

"No, he could not swallow it," she replied.

The wife and both the women looked in Pills' face. No perceptible expression was on it, but his thoughts were perfectly understood. His wife buried her face in her hands; the women exchanged looks, and the dying man looked from one to the other with an anxious expression, and then continued to gaze at the poor children at the foot of the bed, occasionally making a sad, ghastly attempt at a smile. His breathing became more difficult, the pauses between each inspiration were longer and longer,

and life appeared almost extinct. Strength and intelligence for an instant returned; he raised his head from the pillow, and fixed his gaze again on the children. It would be impossible to describe the extraordinary beauty of the expression that passed across his wan, shrunk features. All the last remnants of life and mind were concentrated in one glance of intense affection. He had paused on the threshold of heaven to cast one last look of love on those who had made earth beautiful. His head then sank back on the pillow, and the certain indications of immediate dissolution appeared. Pills prepared to leave the room; the woman with the infant however made towards him.

"Oh! don't go," she said, "it will soon be over."

The wife held the dying man's hand, and, leaning her face upon it, wept unceasingly. In a few minutes life was extinct. The accustomed moment of dead silence reigned in the room, and was broken by the accustomed burst of grief from the widow. The woman near her drew her sadly, but kindly, from the room. The slattern with the infant took another child by the hand, the rest following in the deepest affliction. Pills

and myself, after closing the poor man's eyes, also took our departure. As we left the house the cries of sorrow were painfully loud, yet barely more so than the efforts at consolation. No solitude was there for grief to indulge in. There was not a room in that small house that did not contain a separate family; there was not a room in it that on that night did not find ample space for more than one of the afflicted family.

But little conversation passed between us as we returned to the house. Even Pills, accustomed as he was to sights of death and destitution in all its phases, seemed depressed. When we had arrived I asked him what would become of the poor fellow's family.

"There is little doubt on the subject, I am afraid," he replied. "Their career is marked out with tolerable exactness. If they follow the general fate of persons in their position, the mother will attempt to keep her family together, and support her children, either by working in a cinder-yard or by charing. Perhaps a subscription may be made for her among the poor inhabitants of the court to start her with a basket of oranges; some humble attempt at a

widow's cap will be made, and probably a bit of black will be introduced about her neck or bonnet, that will occasionally find her an extra customer among her friends. But all will be insufficient. The infant will die of starvation—want of breast-milk, in fact, though entered in the registrar-general's report under the proximate cause of death, whatever it may be; or, perhaps, as may very likely happen, she will take it into the streets with her while she is standing all day on the cold stones to sell her fruit, and the infant will die of an affection of the lungs. The boy—I hardly know him—if he be of sufficient strength, will in time work like his father; if weakly, as is most likely the case, from the great privations I know them all to have endured, he will at first try to work honestly, and finding it fail, he will then most probably turn thief."

"But if the boy tries first to gain his livelihood by honest industry," I said, "I should think that must be a great guarantee against the probability of his turning thief."

"You are greatly mistaken," he replied. "Poverty," be assured, "is the great parent of theft in this part of the metropolis, among boys especially. But respecting this family, if the

mother is absent all day, it follows that things cannot go on well at home; and if she escape gin she will at last enter the workhouse with her children, and the family will be entirely broken up."

"What will become of the eldest girl?" I asked.

"Poor creature," he replied; "her fate, I fear, is worse than that of the others. Let us not speak of her," he continued, "I can look upon the terrible as calmly as most people, but the fate of poor girls, left as she is, and in Westminster too, is more than I can bear to think of. What can she do? She has been occupied solely in assisting her mother. Fit for no remunerative employment, there are the three primary inducements to prostitution before her—poverty, example, and innate female love of dress. She will soon be a woman with a woman's sins, while yet a child in mind and body. The sorrows, crimes, and health of the unrepentant Magdalen, while yet in the freshest days of childhood, the worn-out life—ere life is hardly commenced—is, I am afraid, her inevitable lot. In less than two years she will have passed away and all memory of her lost."

"But are there no means of saving her from such a fate?" I asked.

"None that I know of," he replied. "There are many that interest themselves in reclaiming the fallen; but none that can prevent the fall in localities such as this. Many will look with compassion on the erring sister, who will take no step to keep the infant daughter from sinning."

"Can she not enter the workhouse?" I said.

"The parish would take her, I have no doubt; but though our guardians are most charitable men, they are so overburdened with pauperism, that every case is obliged to be sifted with the greatest care; and men in their position, who would willingly give the maximum of relief, are obliged to keep rigidly to the minimum. Besides, her chances would be little improved if she entered the union. When old enough for service, who will take her? The rich will not, for they will have none but clever, practised servants; the middle classes will not take her, for they imitate the great; the small tradesman may do so from economy, but more from charity; and what is the result? Every wretched drab who gets four pounds a year in the neighbourhood considers herself at liberty to assume superiority,

and taunts the workhouse child with her inferior position. She returns disgusted to the union, and is again engaged by perhaps some poor lodginghouse-keeper. But her employer, being herself in difficulties, most probably underfeeds the growing girl, who steals scraps of provisions from the pantry, and gets severely punished, besides having to listen to some salutary reflections on the impolicy of taking girls from the workhouse; and the result, in the majority of cases, is the same as if they had done without the assistance of the parish from the beginning."

"And the father—did you know anything of him?" I asked.

"Very little," he replied. "He was a commonplace, hard-working labourer, more sober than his class generally, rose early, fared badly, and yet was content with his lot. The curse of labour he sought of God as a blessing, thanked Him when he got it, and trembled lest the cruelty of man, or misfortune should deprive him of it. His sole happiness was in his ungainly wife and squalid children, beautified by the intense love the Almighty so frequently plants in the hearts of the poorer classes for their offspring—a love increasing in intensity as their poverty grows

the more profound. Through my connection with the working classes, which, as you may imagine, has been most extensive, I have become thoroughly convinced that pure, unaffected, disinterested family love is far more common among them than in any other position in society."

It was now getting late, and as Pills had more than once complained of some premonitory symptoms of the chronic rheumatism, from which he suffered, I wished him good night, and returned to my lodgings.

CHAPTER XX.

THE OPERA HOUSE.

I CONTINUED my duties as operatic and musical critic on my uncle's paper, and soon got so well into the routine that my reports not only gave him great satisfaction, but I was occasionally requested to contribute on the same subjects to one of the leading daily journals, the honour being the greater as it was often on the most artistic and scientific performances that my services were required. It may possibly be objected, and at first sight with some show of reason, that, in no part of these memoirs has any mention been made of my having studied music; and, therefore, my contributions on the subject were not really of the value the editors set upon them. At the same time, I may truly state that I have a very keen ear for music, especially for time and tune. Moreover, during

my long residence in Italy I was a constant frequenter of the opera, and as in the different cities, especially Milan, the performances of the preceding evening were generally, the next morning, severely criticised in the cafés and *spezirias*, I at length became tolerably conversant with the matter myself. Added to this, when in London on my first engagement as a critic, I not only in composition followed the best models and made a study of my subject, but I also acquired a considerable knowledge of harmony and instrumentation, in which I was greatly assisted by X——, the first violoncello in the orchestra of the Italian Opera House, whose friendship I was fortunate enough to make.

With respect to my notices of the ballet, I admit—and without hesitation—they were principally based on the advice and hints given me by my old friend Lefevre, and to do him justice, his criticisms, whether right or wrong, were based upon a perfect and unprejudiced integrity. After all, according to the taste of the present day, many of his conclusions might be disputed ; but ideas of grace and beauty as connected with the ballet are so thoroughly conventional that points, which in the days of Monck Mason and Laporte

might have been considered as almost reaching the sublime, would now be held as utterly ridiculous, and it would be waste of time to dwell at any length on the subject. I should here, in common candour, admit that my uncle's advice to me respecting the danger of making acquaintance with the actors and actresses was scarcely carried out as strictly as it might have been. At the same time there was more than one mitigating circumstance in my case. I was thoroughly acquainted with the manners and habits of the whole of the *employées* of an Italian Opera company from the prima donna to the "*Capo d'Illuminatori*," or the head lamplighter as he would be called in plain English. I was also fully acquainted with their idiosyncrasies, bickerings, jealousies and envies, and was therefore but in little danger of losing my independence by making their too intimate acquaintance, and consequently I made a rule of limiting my familiarity to the ordinary courtesies of life, and never in a single instance to form a close intimacy with any. This determination on my part soon became apparent, and no more attacks were made on my heart by the ladies, nor endeavours to bias my judgment by the gentlemen, so that in

the end things went on with me in the theatre in a perfectly satisfactory manner.

Notwithstanding this assumption of independence on my part, when I look back at the long vista of years that I have passed through since my services as operatic critic were first engaged by my uncle, the employment must have had far greater charms for me than at the moment I was aware of, so vividly do the scenes and adventures which then occurred now present themselves to me. It was a portion of Laporte's (the manager) policy to show every possible courtesy and politeness to the members of the public press, especially those employed on the more influential papers. I had the good fortune to be among those whom he delighted to honour, and I had but at any time to ask him for a box or a ticket for a friend to have my wish complied with. I had, moreover, in common with a few other members of the press—probably, on my part, from the patronage of my friend Lefevre, who was, as far as the ballet was concerned, the great lessee's right-hand man—the privilege of going behind the scenes, which I frequently availed myself of. And this I did less from its affording me any facility for the performance of

my duties as a critic, than for the amusement I obtained from it. Here, if I found much to ridicule and despise, I was also able to discover a considerable amount to respect and admire, far more in fact than the outside public would have given them credit for. Even among the members of the ballet the amount of good and evil which might have been detected, and frequently in the same individual, was not only great, but often exceedingly interesting. Of their moral character, as a whole, perhaps the less said about it the more to their honour. Still among them there might be found—and many too—specimens of the most honourable womanhood. Mademoiselle M——, who quitted the stage to marry a wealthy, though not particularly talented English gentleman, preserved through the whole of her artistic life an unblemished reputation, and in the face of the most powerful temptations to the majority of her class—money, for among her admirers were some of the wealthiest, but, at the same time, least reputable of our aristocracy.

There were many other honourable female members of the ballet whose acquaintance I made, and whose forms and features now start

up before me in wonderful life-like vividness. For example, there is Madame Montessu, the sister of Paul, the celebrated dancer at the Paris Opera House—never did a breath of slander sully her name. With her memory is also connected one of those episodes which I noticed so frequently in Italy, in which the painful is often concealed under the smile of pleasure. One evening after she had finished a long and difficult dance with great skill and grace, she was called forward to receive the plaudits she had so justly earned. Several bouquets were thrown to her, which, with a beautiful smile on her countenance she gratefully acknowledged, and then quitting the stage by a wing at which I was standing she burst into tears. I asked one of the girls who had spoken to her the cause of her sorrow, and found she suffered so intensely from chilblains she could hardly walk, and yet with a smile on her countenance, though suffering great torture, poor Montessu had gone through her dance with perfect grace and agility.

Then again there was Mademoiselle T——, for many years the leading star of the ballet both in London and Paris, whom an enthusiastic

brother critic on a fashionable morning paper described as the "incarnate poetry of motion." No woman's life, no matter in what position of society, could have been more honourable than that lady's. And this is the more to be admired as it would be difficult to imagine any woman who during the height of her fame had more admirers, many of whom were of enormous wealth. Of one of the latter class I may quote the following anecdote. One evening when I was on the stage a few minutes before the curtain was to be raised for the ballet, I heard one of the *coryphées* say to another, "Let us go and have a look at Beauty and the Beast." I followed them and saw Mademoiselle T—— in conversation with a certain lord, who at the time was one of His Majesty's ministers. I can remember him as he appeared that evening as perfectly as if he were at present before me, as well as the dancer; but the impressions they made on me were of a totally different character. For the latter my feeling was one of intense admiration; for the noble lord it was one of intense disgust. He was a tall, stout man and broad shouldered, but stooped almost to a deformity, and was considerably more than middle-

aged. His countenance as he leered at her was to me perfectly repulsive; he would at the moment have made an excellent sculptor's model for a Silenus. He was paying the dancer some outrageous compliments, all of which she received most composedly and in a really lady-like manner, merely smiling, occasionally bowing—nothing more. At length the prompter's bell rang to clear the stage prior to the ascent of the curtain, and his lordship left us to take his seat in his box. As he quitted Mademoiselle T—— he cast on her a glance he evidently meant to be pleasing—or rather captivating—but to which she appeared to pay no attention. His back was hardly turned when she cast on him a look of such withering scorn and contempt, which, if he had seen, must have gone home to him, thick skinned and secure in his aristocratical position as he might be. Nor were her eyes alone that followed him. A bevy of *coryphées* who had ensconced themselves in a convenient position, left their hiding place and joined in a volley of ridicule and laughter which it was fortunate for him that his self-conceit rendered him unconscious of. The whole scene both pained and astonished me. It pained me, for at the time I

had seen little of our nobility, and I felt for them a considerable amount both of reverence and respect, not only for their high birth, but still more from the fact that they composed the highest legislative body in the nation, and being exceedingly patriotic, I considered them collectively as an executive composed of Briton's best, wisest and bravest. His lordship's behaviour astonished me, inasmuch as I could not understand how it was possible that a man in his elevated position, for no greater pleasure than a ridiculous flirtation with a ballet dancer, could have behaved in such a manner. I have since learnt that lords may do still worse without in any way losing caste with the population at large.

There was more than one other nobleman whose conduct occasionally excited my contempt and disgust. If less open and barefaced than the one I have mentioned above, it arose from no sense of decorum or dread of public opinion, but solely from pride, objecting to be seen mixing with those beneath them in social position. As a proof of this pride in one of them, as well as his total disregard of all delicacy of feeling, I may quote the following authentic anecdote.

In the old theatre in Laporte's time there were two entrances to the stage from the body of the house, one to the left of the audience through which the ordinary *habitués* passed; the other on the right. The latter was reserved exclusively for the lessee so that he might go from his box to the stage without interference or observation. Beside his box was that of the nobleman alluded to, and as he was a man of immense wealth, and lavish with it on all subjects connected with his pleasure and depraved habits, among which the opera and the ballet ranked high, his patronage was much courted by the manager and certain of the artists. By way of securing his favour Mr. Laporte one season presented him with a key which opened the door hitherto reserved for his own use. At the end of the season his lordship returned the key by his confidential valet. The next year the lessee again presented the key, thanking his lordship at the same time for the patronage and liberality he had experienced at his hands during the past season.

"No, thank you, my friend," said his lordship. "That key during the last season cost me from fifteen to twenty thousand pounds, and I cannot

afford again to accept your kind offer." And yet it has been stated that this nobleman, who could afford to squander such sums out of his enormous income on his pleasure without the remotest risk of making a debt, but even accumulated money the while, was never known during the whole course of his life to bestow a ten-pound note on a deserving object of charity. I had some few years afterwards an opportunity of seeing a good deal of this nobleman (who, by the way, is believed to have served the late Mr. Thackeray as the model for his character of the Earl of Steyne in his novel of "Vanity Fair"), when I spent a short time in Milan, where he resided for some six months. I will not detain the reader with a description of the reputation he then bore among both Italians and Germans, but suffice it to say that those who held the character of the British nobleman in respect might, even in the present day, when so many years have passed since the occurrence, still find many reminiscences of him which would afford them much mortification. Should the reader doubt the veracity of the description I have given of this nobleman's character, let me point in my justification to a certain trial which took place, some years after

his death, at the Old Bailey, in which several episodes of his life were brought prominently under the notice of the public. At this trial a man and woman, both on the staff of his private establishment, the latter (without a tinge of shame on her countenance) gave evidence on most objectionable subjects; while the man's was even more detestable. Should this statement appear too strong for belief, I have but to refer the reader to the public press of the day, which, whether Liberal or Tory, not only stigmatised the details brought to light with an emphasis and indignation worthy of all praise, but passed some severe animadversions on the judge when summing up for the little disapprobation he exhibited in his remarks on the facts which were brought to light during the trial.

Besides the two noblemen alluded to, there were others who might be quoted as tending but little to the credit of our aristocracy as exhibited in the patronage of the Italian Opera. One perhaps might be brought forward, a member of the King's Ministry, whose conduct, though not so openly brought under the notice of the public as that of Thackeray's Earl of Steyne, was little less objectionable. He also

possessed an immense fortune, but did little good with it. In works of charity he was fully as mean as the two others I have alluded to. But another element is mixed up with my reason for bringing these noblemen, who were among the most prominent supporters of the Opera House, especially under the notice of the reader, inasmuch as to them I attribute the proximate cause of the cynicism of my character. I found that between them they also possessed the right of presentations, or, in other words, were patrons of some forty-five or fifty Church of England livings, and on their judgment was vested the selection as well as the merit of the clergy and their orthodoxy to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants resident in the different localities or parishes, by nature of the vested rights they had both inherited, and that without incurring the slighest scandal or remark from the different bishops in whose dioceses the livings were situated.

Besides the noblemen alluded to, there were many others who made themselves notorious by their profligacy, but of whom, out of respect to the feelings of their descendants, I will not further allude. One thing, however, as a matter of

justice to the nobility of the present day, deserves to be mentioned—those already spoken of were to a man, when young, frequenters of the court of George the Fourth, several of them being his intimate associates. No greater reformation has taken place among any class in England in their respect for decency and public opinion, as well as in their private lives, than that which now exists between the manners and habits of the nobility of the present generation and those which were common some forty years ago. Neither will I dwell upon the minor patrons of the opera in those days, many of whom, with a morbid love of notoriety, attempted by their follies to push themselves on the notice of the fashionable public, succeeding perhaps for a few months in so doing, and then sinking back again into insignificance, with an empty purse, and a vast amount of contempt and ridicule.

To return to the ladies of the ballet. It must not be imagined that the few I have mentioned by any means comprised the only ones entitled to our respect for their honourable method of life. There were, for example, Madam G—— and Madam B——, both of whom had formerly been members of the ballet, whose lives were so

far above scandal that they were selected as teachers of dancing to the young princess who was afterwards to be our Queen. It may naturally be imagined that neither of them would have been chosen for a duty of the kind had not her reputation been in every sense of the word perfectly irreproachable.

Of the majority of the other ladies of the ballet it must be owned that their reputation would hardly be improved by investigation—certainly as far as their morality was concerned. They were generally considered as a set of harpies, who lived on and accumulated wealth by the plunder of the silly and wealthy fools who patronised them. But even here public opinion, in nine cases out of ten, was in error. That they absorbed wealth, and that to a large amount, during their residence in London, was certain; but they in their turn were the dupes of others still worse than themselves—for example, swindlers, Jews, and jewellers, who generally succeeded in plundering them of their gains, so that very few left England with much more money than they had brought with them, and that was little enough. At least so I was informed by Lefevre, who was perfectly well versed

in the manners and habits of the opera ballet girl. And here, by way of not losing caste in the estimation of the reader, let me again remark that my knowledge of the ballet and its members was principally due to information I had received from Lefevre, my own acquaintance with them being confined solely to giving a civil reply when spoken to in the theatre, or the ordinary courtesies of salutation when meeting them in the streets. This coolness on my part arose, however, from no dislike to them, but from my determination to keep my reports as far as possible from even a suspicion of prejudice or favouritism.

I must candidly admit that many of Lefevre's anecdotes respecting the dancers had great charms for me, the more so as he generally dwelt on the brighter side of their adventures, making but little mention of the more objectionable. Many of his narratives were exceedingly interesting, tending as they did to prove the truth of Shakespeare's words, that—

> "There is some soul of goodness in things evil
> Would men observingly distil it out?"

Notwithstanding all their petty bickerings and jealousies, their efforts to assist one another

when in distress, and that too when frequently on the verge of want themselves, were not only admirable, but frequently almost pathetic as well. I could, but for the fear of fatiguing my readers, quote many cases in point, but will content myself with one or two, merely in proof that I do not make my statement without good data to go upon.

A pretty brunette, a certain Frosine M——, one of the *coryphées* who danced in the first row of the ballet, arrived in England for the opening of the 1839 season, accompanied by her father, a dissipated-looking man of some fifty years of age, who, according to his own statement, had formerly been a captain in the French army, and took up their abode in a poor lodging which had been secured for them somewhere near Golden Square. Frosine was a well-spoken, attractive-looking girl of about eighteen or nineteen years of age, loquacious, thoroughly good-natured, and of very pleasing address. Moreover, in private life she dressed well, yet neatly, and had altogether a lady-like appearance rarely met with in one of her profession.

Whatever reputation for propriety of demeanour Frosine might have borne in Paris was

known only to herself, as but little of her private history was known prior to her arrival in London. If she had always conducted herself with propriety she must have inherited that virtue from her mother, for a more unworthy character than her father it would have been difficult to imagine. He seemed to possess every vice of the French soldiery without one of their honourable characteristics. He was a drunkard and a bully, and it was more than suspected a coward as well. But whatever his daughter's antecedents may have been, in London she conducted herself with remarkable propriety, that is to say, for one in her profession. This honourable distinction, however, was attributed by some to a strong attachment she had formed for one of the male dancers, a certain Appiani, a respectable young fellow enough, but with little talent for his profession. Nor was this much to be wondered at, for till he was some twenty-two or twenty-three years of age he had never dreamt of taking up the profession as a means of obtaining a livelihood, and to gain any eminence as a dancer, it is necessary to begin practising when quite a boy. He was of a very respectable Milanese family, but having mixed himself up in some intrigue

against the Austrian government he was obliged to leave Italy, not only without a profession but with a very trifling sum of money to support himself till he could find some occupation. How he became a dancer is not known, probably by some one of his countrymen getting the manager of the Paris theatre to take him into his company, more possibly as an act of charity than from any other cause.

When Frosine's father heard of her engagement with Appiani, he flew into a violent passion. Had she made an acquaintance, no matter of how immoral a description, with a wealthy Englishman, he might have offered no opposition, possibly even have closed his eyes to it altogether, as he might in a pecuniary way have profited by it; but a poor though perfectly honest man might deprive him of some of the money he now obtained from his daughter's labours. He not only abused him roundly, but threatened Appiani with personal violence if he did not break off his engagement with his daughter, though without any effect on either, so strong was their attachment to each other.

The bully now adopted another policy, and instead of quarrelling with his daughter, he at-

tempted to work on the strong affection she had hitherto borne him, though heaven knows that, apart from the natural love of a child to a father, she had but little cause for affection towards him. He had contrived to get into debt in the neighbourhood, and then brought her the bills saying that if she did not pay them he should certainly be sent to prison. This was a cruel blow for the poor girl as for some weeks she had been living as economically as possible in order that she might purchase her wedding outfit and other things preparatory to housekeeping, as she had determined when married she and her husband should start as teachers of dancing as soon as the opera season was over. The bills paid, Frosine again attempted to economise, and her father again commenced the brutal behaviour he had at first shown and this he carried to such an extent that she was obliged one day to leave the house and take shelter in the room of one of the ballet-girls who lived near her. There she remained for three or four days, dreading the while a visit from her father, but he did not make his appearance. And then she accidentally heard that he was going for the day into the country with a friend, and she deter-

mined during his absence to return to the house for some articles she required, and among them an emerald ring on which she set a great value, and which she kept safely locked up in a little box in a chest of drawers. This ring had been given to her by Appiani, and was an old family jewel, the only one of those he had brought with him from Italy, he having been obliged to dispose of the others. Frosine brought the box back with her, delighted to have the ring once more in her possession. She then, on the advice of Appiani, wrote to her father saying where she was living, and also informing him that if he abstained from annoying her she would willingly pay him half her weekly salary, but solely on that condition.

Things now went on smoothly enough with Frosine, when Appiani was seized with an attack of typhus fever which appeared to increase in intensity as time passed on. Of course his moderate salary ceased during his illness, and poor Frosine was now put to a further expenditure to pay for the extra comforts and necessaries, Dr. Billing, the physician of the opera house, attending him without taking any fees. At last Frosine became so impoverished she was obliged

to sell a great part of her wardrobe to meet their expenses. Her lover at length died, and the poor girl was almost broken hearted. Never was desolation greater than hers. Her father, when he heard of Appiani's death, called on her and attempted (it need hardly be said, hypocritically) to console her, but shallow as his hypocrisy was, she failed to see through it, and all her affection for him returned for the pity he showed her. But now preparations had to be made for the funeral, and where to obtain the funds Frosine for some time knew not. At last she resolved to pawn her ring, and for that purpose went to the shop of a pawnbroker residing in Saint Martin's Lane who transacted a considerable amount of business with the artists of the Italian Opera.

"I want you to lend me as much money as you can on that ring," said Frosine, addressing the shopman.

"It will only be a few shillings," he replied, smiling.

"A few shillings!" said Frosine, astonished. "Why, every one says that the stone is a valuable one."

"It was," said the shopman. "That I admit,

and in proof I gave no less than twelve pounds for it about three weeks ago, but the one now in it is only imitation."

Frosine, scarcely able to hold herself erect, staggered from the shop and with great difficulty reached home. She now understood all. Her unworthy father had, during the few days which elapsed after she quitted the house, opened her box with a false key, and abstracted the emerald from the ring, placing a piece of coloured glass in it instead.

Frosine now borrowed a few pounds from a friend, and the funeral took place. After it was over she returned to the lodgings she had occupied with her father. Her behaviour to him was somewhat singular. She paid him every respect and was careful of his comforts, but hardly ever addressed a word to him. Of course he remarked it, but treated it with indifference. She worked to support him in idleness, and it would be to his own disadvantage to quarrel with her. One more point remains to be mentioned in her conduct. Infamously as he had behaved to her, by way of sparing his feelings she had abstained from letting him know that she was aware of the act he had committed.

When Lefevre asked her why she had not done so, she replied, "*C'etait infame, mais, voyez-vous, il est toujours mon père.*"

I may also quote another case of the kind, charitable feeling which was perpetually developing itself among the persons employed in the theatre. And this is the more remarkable, as one of the principal actors in it was merely a poor stage carpenter. I had noticed among those girls who danced in the last row of the ballet one whose appearance and manner somewhat interested me. Her face, however, was her principal attraction. If not positively beautiful it was about as perfect a specimen of the Leonardo di Vinci school of painting as could possibly be imagined, and of which instances may still be found among the peasantry in the northern parts of the Milanese districts and the Brienza mountains. The face was oval, complexion clear and good, a small, well-formed mouth, and teeth as white as pearls. Her eyes were large and dark, her hair golden, and though wavy, of fine silky quality, and her brow clear, showing considerable intelligence. But what pleased me more than all was the mild and amiable expression on her features, especially

when speaking. But with her face all Elena's charms ended, though with time it was more than probable the objectionable points in her figure might vanish, she being then a fast growing girl of about fifteen years of age, and as thin as a skeleton. From her awkward manner, and ungraceful form, she was the butt for the wit and humour of all the other young girls who danced in the same row with her. She submitted, however, to all their jokes with perfect good humour, thereby proving that the expression of amiability on her face was a truthful one, for many of the remarks made by her companions might have roused the anger of an angel, that is to say if she understood them, for she only knew a few words of English. How she ever got into the *corps de ballet* was a mystery to me, and this perhaps more than anything else excited my curiosity about her, and I applied to Lefevre for information.

"Personally I know but little about her," was his reply. "My attention was first called to her by one of the scene shifters, who told me that in his house, somewhere down in the back slums of Westminster where most of our carpenters and other industrials reside, there lived

an Italian woman and her daughter, who rented a back room at the top of the house. Not only was it almost destitute of furniture, but they were in the most abject distress. They were, moreover, unable to pay their rent, and it was only from a feeling of charity that the landlord did not turn them into the street. The mother, he further told me, was suffering from some painful malady, he knew not what, and which totally precluded her from earning anything. He implored me if possible to do something for the girl, as it would be a great act of charity. 'I thought, sir' he continued, 'that you might be able to help her, so I took the liberty to ask you.' I inquired what sort of a girl she was, to know if she would do for the hinder rows in the ballet. He told me she was fifteen, and tall for her age, and everybody said when her face was clean she was remarkably pretty. 'But I don't pretend,' he added, 'to be a judge of those matters myself.'"

"Well now," Lefevre went on, "as one can always make some use in the ballet of a tall young girl with a pretty face, I told the scene shifter that he might send her to me, and if I could in any manner help her I would do so.

The next morning Elena Pistrucci called on me, and notwithstanding the almost squalid rags she wore (in fact so shabby was she that the porter at the stage door could hardly be persuaded to allow her to pass, imagining that she only wished to see me for the purpose of begging) in a few minutes she contrived to make a most favourable impression on me. Not only did I find her face remarkably handsome, but she had a soft mild voice, and a candid truthful manner which seemed to carry conviction with it. She told me her Mamina had formerly been a singer, but that from a severe cold she had caught, combined with inflammation of the lungs, she had lost several notes in her voice. That in consequence she had fallen into a state of great poverty, and was so much reduced in circumstances that she had been obliged to sing in the streets before leaving Italy as she could get no engagement in the theatre. And then she had heard that in London people were very rich and charitable, but very bad judges of music, and did not care so much about your being out of tune if you only sang out loud and *con amore*. Now as these two things the Mamina could do to perfection she determined in any way she

best could to reach England, and as she knew a man who played the organ and was going there, and who had offered to take them under his protection and guidance, they had all three started off together.

"Long and weary was their way through France, still they persevered, and succeeded at last in reaching Dover. Here the poor woman was taken seriously ill; but somewhat recovering, she started off with the barrel-organ grinder, and at length reached London. How they were induced to reside in Westminster she could not say, beyond that the organ-grinder had the address of a countryman there, who, he was informed, would be able to help him. On their arrival, however, they could hear nothing of him, so they took up their quarters in the house where the mother and daughter now reside. A few days afterwards, however, the organ-grinder found that his countryman had removed to Holborn, whither he himself went, leaving the poor woman, who was again attacked with sickness, with only a few shillings, and they had not seen him since.

"I was so much pleased with the poor girl," Lefevre continued, "that I lent her a little

money to buy some food and decent clothing, and told her to call upon me again in a few days, and I would then see what could be done for her. This she did, accompanied by her Mamina (as she calls her), a great, stout, tall, yet unhealthy-looking woman, who gave me a sad and long story of her distress and sorrows, and the destitute condition they were in. I asked her if the girl had received any education, and she told me that she could read and write well. She had attempted to teach her the rudiments of singing, but found she had but little voice, and no ear for tune. I looked at the girl for some time, turning over in my mind what I could do for her. Her face, as I said before, was pretty, but she was nearly as thin as a skeleton. The thought then struck me that perhaps protracted starvation might have caused this excessive emaciation, and if she could have better food she might improve. The result was that I engaged her at the rate of fourteen shillings a week; and I got one of the assistants of the ballet-master to give her some lessons, with strict instructions to keep in the background. She certainly improves, and in time may make a fair dancer. One thing I may say which is most

praiseworthy. Every farthing she earns goes to the Mamina and the payment of the current rent; the arrears she has not as yet been able to wipe off. Altogether she is a *brava tosa*, as they say in Milan, and if I can help her in any way I will do it."

CHAPTER XXI.

I MATRICULATE IN CYNICISM.

I HAD now, considering all things, a very happy life of it. I had got thoroughly into my work, and I liked it; in fact, no other occupation could have been so well adapted for my habits and peculiar train of thought. It must not, however, be imagined that I had altogether got over the loss of my dear Clelia, for that would be doing me a great injustice. At the same time it would be affectation on my part to say that its poignancy had not been much ameliorated by time; nay more, the happiness I felt in the reminiscence of the months I had passed in her society smoothed to a certain degree my great grief at her death. I had also another solace, and a great one too. I was now, in the evenings when alone in my rooms (no very frequent occurrence with me, by the way, for my evenings as a rule were fully employed), able to conjure

up before me the perfect resemblance of her form and features, for I would not for a moment have it thought I believed it was her spirit, as almost to make me imagine it was her real presence. So perfect was the unreal identity, if I may coin the expression, that had she been living it could not have been more exact. Singularly enough, by some psychological phenomenon which I am unable to explain, I had never seen her dressed in the white robe she always wore on these occasions. I have in a former chapter mentioned that in one of the churches in Sienna I had seen a picture of an angel, I forget by what artist, dressed in a peculiar-shaped white robe, and holding a lily in her hand, which strongly resembled her, and it was in that pose, though her features were her own, that she always appeared to me. Often on these occasions did Boccaccio's story of the tent-maker's wife occur to me, and earnestly did I regret that that there was no monk-artist, no Fra Girolamo, who could have taught me the art of depicting the lovely phantom-form on canvas.

I not only gave great satisfaction to my uncle the editor, but he began to take so much interest in me that he seemed to look upon me more

as a son than a half-nephew. Among other means of showing his affection for me, he one day determined to give a little dinner party at the "Crown and Sceptre," at Greenwich, in order to introduce me to some of his friends, who he thought might be useful to me. I need hardly say that I was most grateful to him for his kindness, and looked forward to the day on which the dinner was to take place with considerable impatience. At last it arrived, and the guests, eight in number, met at Greenwich. Certainly, at first sight, they appeared about as incongruous a set of individuals as it would be possible to meet with. But discordant as they appeared to be, the conversation during dinner was certainly not only agreeable, but intellectual as well. The lion of the party was a certain Mr. Z——, a member of the Bar, a fluent speaker, and the editor of a paper notorious for its high Tory politics, between whom and my uncle, whose political opinions were directly the reverse, a paper war was carried on in their different journals with great acrimony, and that too in the very emphatic phraseology in use in that day. In private society, however, they were always on the most friendly terms, each

evidently holding the other in sincere respect. There was also a Mr. S——, the editor of a quarterly then in great repute from the excellence of its articles, especially on scientific and artistic subjects, but who interfered rarely with politics, and even then only in the mildest and gentlest manner. There was also my uncle Pills, and a very great crony of his, a certain Dr. Watson, a Member of the College of Surgeons, a man somewhat past the prime of life, who had never been able to settle down in private practice, not from any want of ability on his part—for he was most skilful in his profession—but from being so tall and ungainly as to be unpleasing to his patients—to those, at least, who could pay, for among the poor he had abundant opportunities for practice, and to spare. From being unable to make a living on shore, and not having sufficient influence to obtain an appointment in the army or navy, the only employment which appeared open to him was the mercantile marine. The greater part of his professional life he had passed in ships where the 'tween decks might have averaged five feet six inches in height, and he had thus acquired a habit of stooping which at length had become chronic, and

almost resembled a deformity. At last he obtained the appointment of resident medical officer at the Westminster Infirmary, which he held when I made his acquaintance. He was, beyond his profession, a most intelligent man and a great traveller, having visited almost every known country in the world. Altogether, notwithstanding his ugliness, he was a most agreeable companion. The two other guests were, one, the proprietor of an influential country newspaper, who had arrived in town to make an engagement with some London correspondent whom he might select; the other was manager of a West End theatre, who wanted a good translation of Rossini's "Semiramide."

My uncle first introduced me to the editor of the Tory paper, who complimented me highly on my reports on the Italian Opera. He further told me that he was already engaged with a musical critic, with whose contributions he had every reason to be content, but that in the slack season he would be happy to take from me occasional papers on musical subjects, provided they did not interfere with the gentleman already on his staff. The editor of the magazine went still further, and in the course of the even-

ing gave me a commission to write a sixteen-page article on the state of music in Italy; and the proprietor of the provincial paper also promised to take occasional letters from me on social and fashionable movements in the metropolis. With the theatrical manager I did not make any arrangement. The terms he offered were liberal enough; but I declined them, believing that it was impossible to make a good translation of an Italian libretto into English, the construction of the two languages being so different that it was not possible to make a perfect English metrical version without the musical accent falling in the wrong place.

The dinner, which was excellent, passed off gaily enough, and I came out with great effect with my anecdotes about the opera, Frosine and her father among the rest. Although the whole of the guests listened with interest to what I said, offering but few remarks themselves, two among them, and those of all others the men whom I should have thought the least likely to be so, were very loquacious—my uncle Pills and Dr. Watson—their profession and occupation giving them but little time to become acquainted with matters of the kind. And yet they both

now fully endorsed all the good I told them I had found among these "things evil," and went so far as to say (Dr. Watson especially) that it was in their power to quote other anecdotes of a similar description which had come under their personal knowledge, but how they could have obtained them I could not imagine, though I then asked neither of them any questions on the subject.

The dinner over, the conversation became more genial and unrestrained. The two editors, the newspaper proprietor, with my uncle and the theatrical manager conversed together, while the two doctors and myself formed another group. Our conversation first turned on the organization of our mercantile navy in general, and that of the Hon. East India Company's service in particular. Although I took but little part in the discussion, I listened attentively and with great interest. On the latter subject a wonderful unanimity of opinion existed between us. We all agreed that it would have been impossible to have found in the world any employment for a member of the medical profession, a man of education and a gentleman, more objectionable than in the East India Company's naval

service. Frequently the very amount of science a medical man possessed was accepted as an excuse for treating him with greater disrespect. Again, the officers, instead of attempting to elevate the position of their men, seemed to strive to do all in their power to debase and demoralize them, pandering to the basest passions of the sailor, and objecting to any elevation of his moral feeling as tending to make him discontented with his lot, as well as inculcating disobedience and mutiny. The other branches of the naval mercantile service then came under discussion. On this subject Dr. Watson was the principal speaker. He had, it appeared, been for more than one voyage the surgeon of convict ships bound to Australia. Some of the scenes he had witnessed on these occasions, especially in female convict ships, he described in a very graphic manner, the details of which would be totally unfit for these pages, and I will pass them over in silence. One alone I will mention, which was the right the captain possessed (and which he frequently made use of) to inflict corporal punishment on the female convicts under his charge. It was no unfrequent occurrence for one of these poor creatures, who

had happened to commit some breach of discipline, often for merely having given offence to one of the mates, to be lashed up to one of the gratings at the gangway and receive one or two dozen lashes from the boatswain, exactly in the same manner as seamen in the Navy or East India Company's service, and that without any objection from the government authorities. Indeed, from Dr. Watson's description it was difficult to imagine how it was possible on the ship's arrival in the Colony that any of these poor women could have retained one attribute of honourable womanhood among them.*

Our attention was now called to a loud and apparently angry discussion which had arisen between my uncle and the other newspaper editor. So energetic in fact was it, that we were afraid a violent quarrel would ensue between them.

"How can you talk such nonsense, Z——," said my uncle, in a tone of voice so loud that it might have been heard by the boatmen in front of the tavern. "All your fulsome praise of the

* The reader should remember that the doctor's experience of convict ships occurred far more than half a century ago.

administration of justice in this country may do very well in one of your leaders, and carry good effect with it; but here, among ourselves, you must be aware that it is quite thrown away. Our judges always 'temper their justice with mercy'—do they? Is there a country in Europe where there is half as many criminals executed in the course of a year as in England?—and that too after all the milder changes which have lately been made in our criminal code. And then by what means were the changes made? Was it at the instigation of our judges? Not one. So far to the contrary, every one (or at the best with very few honourable exceptions) opposed every attempt made to modify the severity of our laws, and they only yielded when they found public opinion too strong for them."

"I defy you to mention one proof, one good tangible proof of the truth of your statement," said Z——, in a tone which fully told us he thought he had given my uncle a challenge which he dare not accept.

"And I accept the glove you have so eagerly thrown down," said my uncle. "To begin then. At the early part of the present century were there not at least five hundred offences which,

according to our criminal code, were punishable with death? As a proof of the cruel manner our laws were carried out let us take for example the Cato Street Conspiracy, which occurred even somewhat later. Let us take our facts neither from the reports in your own or my paper, but from those published in a work by the government itself in order that they might avoid the charge being brought against them of any undue severity in the administration of the laws. Abbot was the judge. At that time you may possibly remember, although you might have been a boy, great discontent existed among the working classes; and heaven knows with good cause, for 'famine was sore in the land.' The government by way of showing that they were resolved to put down all insubordination and to punish rebellion with a high hand, concocted, through the means of one of their agents, a little plot of their own, which they mercifully considered would be a salutary warning to all those who considered themselves aggrieved, and were likely to be riotous. The plot itself was so absurd that it creates a wonder in the present day how the public could have closed their eyes to it. It was simply to murder all his Majesty's

Ministers, annihilate the guards, and seize the whole wealth of the nation, dividing it equally among the conspirators. With great skill and rapidity the agent collected together a band of eighteen or twenty men, and selected for their leader a cracked-brained fool who, it was said, had formerly been in the army. Of the others, I knew two by sight. One was an old man who went about the streets selling dolls' bedsteads, and I can well remember his monotonous cry as he used to call the attention of the children at the windows to his wares. As he, from the nature of his avocations, was the one among them best acquainted with business matters, he was told off to seize the Bank of England. The other was a weakly, tall, half-starved looking wretch (his name was Brunt I think) who requested that his office might be to seize the Mansion House. The remainder of the conspirators were all from the same grade of society, with the exception of a poor black sailor who could speak but little English. All being in readiness the officer collected them together in a hayloft in Cato Street, and notice having been given to the police and military authorities, they were seized, and six or eight of them hung at

the Old Bailey; and then with a view of making the scene more impressive, their heads were cut off with a carving knife by a medical student, it is said, who agreed to do the job for ten pounds. The government agent who had concocted the whole affair then had a pension settled on him, with which he retired to Paris. He died some years afterwards, and a government paper (it was not before your time, Z——) described his end as being most exemplary and pious."

"That Abbot, in the case you mention," said Z——, "carried out a very harsh law with too much severity I am perfectly ready to admit, but that does not make good your statement that our judges as a rule are wanting in humanity. You have certainly a very weak case against them if that is all your evidence."

My uncle was for a few moments somewhat at a loss what answer to make. To say the truth he had already taken too much wine and his brain was a little confused. He evidently felt the force of Z——'s remarks, to which he could not reply. Suddenly, however, he recovered himself, and continued with great volubility:—

"I admit that my case was not as completely one in point as it ought to have been, but at the same time I might have quoted many others which were not only more applicable, but of later date than the one I mentioned. Take, for example, Lord Ellenborough's opposition to the bill which was introduced into the House of Lords for the abolition of the punishment of death for secretly stealing to the amount of five shillings, and substituting imprisonment in its place. Why, he was so eloquent in defence of the law as it then stood, that he induced the whole Bench of Bishops to vote with him, that is to say with one exception, and he was at home ill in bed at the time. His eloquence was so convincing that one noble lord remarked that, if the punishment of death for a crime of the kind were abolished 'we should not with safety be able to lay our heads on our pillows.' Now I maintain, and you know it, that there has not been a judge on the Bench whose decisions, as well as his character, are spoken of with greater respect and admiration by those of the present day than Lord Ellenborough's. And then, again, you praise them for their integrity. That they are honest in the fullest sense of the

word I am perfectly ready to admit; but I hardly understand why a man should be complimented for being commonly honest upon £5,000 a year. You and I, Z——, have and justly maintained a reputation for integrity as unblemished as theirs with our joint incomes of less than half the amount, without being thereby 'the envy and admiration of surrounding nations,' which I believe is the usual style of phraseology made use of when the health of the judges is given at City feeds. I was present some time since when a dinner was given by the Lord Mayor to the judges, and while their health was being proposed I watched their countenances, and expression of satisfaction on them when their unblemished integrity was spoken of. The idea then crossed my mind whether either of the learned lords had ever complimented a housemaid for not stealing a spoon, and what would have been the effect on her had he done so. The conclusion I arrived at was, that it was more than probable the poor lass on her sixteen pounds a year, finding her own tea and sugar, might have considered that the compliment suggested the idea that she might be capable of entertaining a thought of the kind,

and have replied by requesting the learned lord to provide himself with another housemaid by that day month. I could go on much longer," continued my uncle, "but my throat is so dry I can hardly speak. Let me help myself to another glass of wine, and then I will bring forward other matters which will prove how absurd your conclusions are, friend Z——."

Mr. Z—— was evidently on the point of making a somewhat angry reply, but suddenly stopped short. He had noticed an expressive glance on the face of Uncle Pills, imploring him not to continue the conversation. Mr. Z—— good humouredly took the hint.

"Well, well," he said, "you may attack our judges, bishops and aristocracy as much as you please as far as their political influence, either foreign or domestic, is concerned, and I will leave you in full possession of the field. But as a rule you cannot mention any class of more honourable life, or more worthy, pious and charitable than our aristocracy. (Here, a loud and rude laugh from my uncle the editor.) I mean what I say," continued Z——, colouring highly, "nay more, from their constant communication with our clergy, they insensibly

contract a respect for morality and integrity far in excess of the other classes of society who have not similar advantages." (Here my uncle was evidently on the point of exploding into another fit of laughter, but catching the eye of Pills, who was watching him with an anxious expression of countenance, he fortunately restrained himself.) "And now let me dwell for a moment on the merits of the female portion of our aristocracy. If the men are worthy of all praise, as I know they are, the women deserve to be idolized. Purer lives than as a rule they lead it would be impossible to find in the world. In all the domestic and family relations of life their conduct is admirable. Their charity and kind feeling is unbounded. Why, when I was staying last year with Lord ——, an old housekeeper, who had been many years in the family, was seized with rheumatic fever which confined her for some weeks to her bed. Well, I am convinced that hardly a day passed without her ladyship visiting her and inquiring personally after her health, and that too with the utmost solicitude. Kinder attention than she showed could not be imagined. Nothing also was more common for her than when she heard that the

wife of a farm labourer was in her confinement to have inquiries made not only whether she was in want of any necessaries, but would unsolicited furnish her with every comfort, and luxuries as well."

My uncle, who had with difficulty restrained himself during Mr. Z——'s remarks, now swallowed another glass of wine, and was on the point of making some observation—and probably, from his excited condition, of an uncomplimentary character—when Pills asked to be allowed to speak instead, which I am happy to say his brother had sense enough still left to permit. Now among the many crotchets which had taken root in the worthy doctor's brain was one relating to that "most excellent gift of charity," and his conclusions on the subject were directly the reverse of those put forth by Mr. Z——. Pills was firmly convinced that charity, proportionate means being taken into consideration, existed to a far greater extent among the poor—even in the lower and more degraded class—than the rich. In fact, that the higher you went in the social scale of life the less it was developed, even till it reached the throne itself where, as in the time of George

the Fourth, it was occasionally almost, if not entirely, lost. In his remarks he stated, and certainly not without some show of reason, that while in the higher classes the commonest acts of kindness and humanity—such, for example, as making inquiries respecting the injuries some unfortunate fellow-creature might have received, perhaps by being run over by a carriage—would be heralded forth to the world as an act of humane and charitable feeling; while another act of humanity, showing fifty times as much kindness, performed by a poor man, would be passed over unnoticed. Actuated by such sentiments it may easily be imagined that Uncle Pills entered heart and soul into his reply to Mr. Z——.

"So far," he said, "from agreeing with you in your opinion of the want of charitable feeling among the poor, low, and even the degraded, I maintain that it is developed among them to an extraordinary extent. And I do not speak without ample experience to go upon, for I have resided for many years among the most poverty-stricken population in the metropolis—those who live in the Almonry at Westminster. The acts of kindness these poor creatures frequently

bestow upon each other, would, if free from their rags, squalor and dirt, be admitted by all to be of extraordinary beauty. If you think that I am prejudiced in their favour, ask Watson, for he knows even more about them than I do. My patients, though among the poorest, are as a rule those who work hard for the bare means of existence, yet generally are honest and respectable; while those patients he frequently is obliged to visit, if not poorer than mine, are among the most degraded and profligate. He knows them well and they respect him, and known as he is to be attached to the Infirmary, he can visit in haunts where no person with a decent coat on his back could enter without the certainty of being robbed. Many of the cases which have come under his notice almost give rise to the thought that God in His pity has implanted in the breasts of these degraded creatures the wonderful charity they possess in order that they might neutralize the sins they commit, sins, by the way, frequently brought about by temptations and provocations of the rich."

"With respect to the wonderful charity of these demoralized creatures I can corroborate

every word that has fallen from the lips of my friend," said Dr. Watson. "Many of the anecdotes I could narrate would if collected, and written out by a practised hand—one accustomed to authorship—form a most interesting volume. Let me give you one example out of many I could quote. A coarse, depraved, drunken virago, well known about Westminster, and who had been 'in trouble,' to use her own phraseology, more than a score of times for robbery and assaults, one winter's evening called at the Infirmary and asked to speak to me. I cannot say that when I saw her I was at all pleased, imagining it was some trifling wound, she might have received in a street row, that she wished me to dress. I inquired what she wanted, and she replied in (for her at least) a remarkably mild tone of voice,

"'Oh! if you please, sir, would you come and see a poor man who is very ill with a wound; it's so bad I don't know what to do to ease him?'

"'Why don't you send him here then, or to some other doctor?' I said. 'This is a hospital to receive the sick, and not to attend them at their own homes.'

"'Yes, sir, I know that,' she replied, 'but no one else would come without being paid, and I cannot afford that, I am poor enough myself. Last week I nearly got myself "into trouble" in trying to get him something to eat he thought he could fancy.'

"'Well, once more, you can bring him here,' I said.

"'But you must come,' she said in a threatening tone of voice. 'You're paid for it, and you shall.'

"'I will not,' I replied; 'and if you give me any impertinence I shall send for a constable and give you into custody.'

"For a moment the woman eyed me with an almost demoniacal expression of countenance. Then suddenly she calmed down, and putting her hands against her breast, she said with tears in her eyes, and in such an imploring tone it almost went to my heart,

"'Oh! for God's sake, sir, do come, He will pay you if I can't. You don't know how ill the poor man is or you would not refuse. And he has so much faith in you, he said if anybody could do him any good you could.'

"Of course I imagined this last was a lie, yet

if the poor fellow was as ill as she stated, the devil would have considerable difficulty in placing the sin of it to his credit. After all, I said to myself, if this wretched creature is willing to run the risk of a gaol to find this poor man food, it will be unkind of me, to say the least of it, if I refuse to go and see him. So I put on my hat and we left the hospital together. After we had advanced a few paces, she said to me,

"'Had I not better walk a little in front of you, sir, and then people won't think you know me.'

"'Do so,' I said, and she then went about a dozen paces before me, I following her. Not only did I keep her in sight, but I looked on her with an amount of respect and good feeling I could not have thought it possible to have entertained ten minutes before. There seemed to be in her a latent sense of delicacy which I should have considered, with my intimate knowledge of her class, utterly impossible to exist. She proved that she understood but too well her utter degradation, and refused to contaminate by her proximity an individual bound on a mission of mercy, though trifling indeed

was it when compared with that she herself was performing, and even that sank into utter insignificance in comparison with what I afterwards discovered in her.

"Well, onward we went, I continuing just as far behind her as would allow me to keep her in sight, through the most crowded parts of the Almonry, till at last we came to one of the vilest slums in it, and those who know the locality must be aware that viler could not be imagined. We arrived at length at the door of a miserable looking one-storied den where she waited till I had joined her. She then ascended the stairs and entered a room which was in total darkness, the only thing I could understand in it was an oppressive putrid atmosphere, and a low moaning. When she had succeeded in lighting a candle, I understood all. The room, which was very small, was almost destitute of furniture, and on a bed of rags in one corner was stretched the form of a man evidently in great pain. I approached him, the woman holding the candle by my side, and removed a loathsome looking large rag from the side of his head and throat. I have seen many terrible cases of cancer in my time, but never one so terrible as that

which then met my eye. Almost the entire side of the face was eaten away, and the whole was one ghastly wound.

"I will not disgust you non-medical men with a description of the examination I made, nor the state of the wound. Suffice it to say I was able to do but little for his relief, or rather from the utter state of destitution of the room. Even when I wanted some linen rag to clean the wound there was none to be found, and the woman, begging my pardon, offered to tear a strip off the end of her gown. This I declined, but a certain text at the moment crossed my mind, without my being able to apply it as perfectly as I wished, about 'the hem of a garment.' Finding I could get nothing there that I wanted for the poor fellow's relief, I took a piece of rag from the bed, and placing it over the wound, I told the woman to come back to the hospital and I would give her some lint dressing and other appliances and tell her how to use them.

"We now left the house, but this time the woman instead of walking in advance of me, kept several paces behind. After continuing for a short time in this manner, my conscience told

me it was hardly just to the wretched creature to allow her to continue her humiliation after the kindness she had shown to the poor man, and I began to conjure up an excuse for inviting her to walk beside me. In a few moments I found one. I would inquire into the history of the man and the relationship which existed between them. I beckoned to her to join me, and then asked who he was.

"'I don't know much about him, sir,' she replied. 'I believe he was formerly very respectable, and kept a shop.'

"'You don't know much about him!' I said, greatly astonished—and then somewhat alarmed at what her answer might be, I continued, 'How long have you known him, and how did you get acquainted with him?'

"'Well, sir,' she replied, 'one night about a fortnight ago, I heard near my house some one moaning, and on looking I saw a man sitting on the ground, leaning his head upon his hand. I asked him what was the matter with him, and he said he was in such pain he did not know what to do. I asked where he lived, but he told me he had no home. He had been in the workhouse, he said, and obliged to leave, as the

other men in the ward said with such a wound as he had got he ought not to be among them, as it made them feel sick to look at him. I then asked him what he'd got the matter with him, and he took the handkerchief which covered his head away, and dark as it was, I could see nearly the whole side of his face was gone, and that it was all one large sore. Well, sir, as I didn't like to leave him there, I took him home with me.'

"'Did you find out who he was?' I asked.

"'He said he'd formerly kept a chemist's shop in the country, but that in consequence of his sore he'd been made a bankrupt, and was obliged to leave. He afterwards tried to get a shopman's place, but no one would have him.'

"'And what have you done for him?' I asked.

"'Well, not much as yet, but it was as much as I could afford. He seemed very weak and I tried all I could to keep his strength up.'

"'What did you give him?' I inquired.

"'Gin.'

"'What good did you think that could do him?'

"'Keep up his strength,' she replied. 'It

has kept up mine often enough when I felt weak and low spirited. But, besides that I got what things I could afford, and often more too, for him to eat that I thought he could relish.'

"I remained silent for a few moments, struck with wonder at the amount of Christian charity displayed, without the hope of fee or reward, by this wretched creature, but I made no remark. She dropped behind me again and followed at a short distance, I continuing my way onwards in a singular frame of mind. I reflected that this debased woman had done an act of charity almost saint-like in its character, and yet with profound humility followed behind me, who, in the matter in hand, had done so little, and that somewhat unwillingly, and yet, I allowed her to follow as unworthy to be on a par with me. More than once I was tempted to ask her to walk beside me, but my Pharisaical pride prevented it, and I continued onwards till we had reached the hospital, when I gave her some lint dressing and other things, telling her how to apply them. The woman received them, and was about to leave the hospital, when suddenly turning round she said, 'God bless you for this, sir,' and then went away. The poor man died

three days afterwards, and the week following the woman was sent to prison on a charge of being drunk and disorderly. Now, Mr. Z——," said Dr. Watson in conclusion, "I challenge you to quote among the whole of your aristocratical acquaintance, one more noble act of charity than the one performed by that low drunken drab."

Before Z—— could make any reply, our attention was called to the heavy breathing of my uncle, the editor, who had fallen fast asleep in his chair in a state closely resembling intoxication. Pills, whose attention had been diverted from him by the interest he took in Dr. Watson's narrative, in a moment saw how matters stood. He whispered to me, "We had better break up at once. You can all go, and I will remain with my brother, and see him safe home." All the others saw the necessity for doing so. With the exception of Dr. Watson and myself, the guests entered the glass coach which was in attendance, and as it was a fine moonlight night and the tide running up, we determined to take a boat. Fortunately we found a pair of oars waiting to return to town. These we engaged, and a few moments afterwards, quietly seated in the boat,

we were on our way homewards. After a short silence, Dr. Watson said to me :—

"After all I am somewhat annoyed with myself for what I said about the want of charity among our richer and more aristocratical classes. In the first place I know so little about them, that it was perhaps unjustifiable on my part to speak of them at all, and the very little I do know would tend rather to a different conclusion. It would have been better had I admitted that they had less opportunity for the development of their latent charity, than the poor. Again, I may say in my defence, that Z——, with his readiness to praise wealthy and titled people, annoyed me, and I lost my temper."

"Well, even if you did," I replied, "it is perfectly true, I believe, that he could not quote among our aristocracy a case equal to the one you mentioned."

"I am not quite sure," said the doctor, "that I could not do it myself, limited as my acquaintance with great people may be. When in India a good many years ago there was a terrible outbreak of small-pox; so bad was it that it resembled a plague more than an epidemic. Our ship was in the roads at the time, and as she

was likely to stay there for some weeks, the governor asked the captain to allow the surgeon to reside the while on shore so that he might help the army surgeons in their labours. The captain consented, and I was sent on shore. The post assigned me was near the outskirts of the city where the disease was raging fearfully. Several of the officers' wives behaved with great kindness to the sick, but an act of humanity performed by one to the infant of a native woman struck me as being exceedingly beautiful. The mother was stretched dying on the ground, and the infant was trying to obtain food from the breast, which came not. The wife of a lieutenant, a proud and very handsome woman, was so touched with pity for the poor infant that, without calculating the severe risk she ran, she took it from the pestiferous corpse of its mother and put it to her own breast. She was then, as I said before, the wife of a lieutenant; her husband is now a general and a baronet. It would be curious to know whether the charitable element is now as strong within her as it was then."

The conversation then changed, and many different subjects were touched upon till at length the doctor made some remark about the

Italian Opera, and I asked him what he thought of the present company and whether he admired Giulia Grisi, who had just made her appearance, and whether she deserved the *furore* she made.

"I never heard her, and I never go there," he replied, "I cannot afford it."

"Never go there!" I said. "Why I should have imagined from the remarks you made when I was speaking about it at dinner that you were there frequently."

"I have only been there one evening during the last five years, and beyond that, I am but a very indifferent judge of music. If you remember it was only when you spoke of the acts of charity you witnessed among the actors that I made any remark, and then only in corroboration of your statements."

"But if you never go there," I asked, "how did you become acquainted with the charitable acts they perform? From what you said you appeared to be well up on the subject."

"And so I maintain I am," said Dr. Watson, laughing, "perhaps even more so than yourself. If you think there is any mystery in the matter it is easily cleared up. Almost all the scene shifters, carpenters, dressers and other subordi-

nates live in or about the Almonry, and they all consider they are entitled when sick to apply to the hospital for relief, and that too when receiving good wages. And certainly they are justly entitled to it as a matter of right, for the Italian Opera singers have, on very many occasions, been amongst our most liberal supporters. If you will call on me some day I will give you ample proofs of it, and that not without being able to show them to be facts. From the statements of the poor people employed there I learnt that, irrespective of the large sums we have received from the principal performers, they are all exceedingly liberal to any one in distress with whom they fully sympathise. Pills also (I beg your pardon for calling your relative by such an absurd name, but that is the one he goes by among his intimates) attends to many of these patients, as of course it is always an inconvenience to me to leave home, and he is as much amused with their narratives as I am."

"But you surely do not mean to say that among your hospital patients you have any of the artists, whether singers or dancers?"

"Certainly as a rule I have not," replied Dr. Watson. "Yet one or two instances might be

quoted by me where some of the poorer have come under my notice, but that is very rare indeed. By the way, do the lords and members of the aristocracy whom you see behind the scenes ever assist any of the poorer artists who may be sick or in distress?"

"I have never heard even of a single case of the kind," I replied. "Lavish as they may be, and generally are, of their money for their own pleasure they are as uncharitable and selfish a body as could be met with in the world. I never heard of a good action any one among them ever did. I assure you did I think all our aristocracy were as selfish as those I meet with there, I should become as thorough a radical as my uncle the editor. As it is I am, through the episodes I have met with at the Opera, almost as cynical."

"If you were to live the life I do and witness a few of the scenes which from time to time come before me," said Dr. Watson, "you would become quite as cynical as your uncle. You could not have a better school to arrive at such a condition than the Almonry in Westminster. Do you know anything about it?"

"Nothing whatever, and hardly understand

what you mean by such a word," I replied. "I certainly had one evening in company with Pills an insight into the home of a poor bricklayer's labourer in Westminster, but I do not remember his calling the place the Almonry."

"Very likely not," said Dr. Watson, "for although the Almonry proper contains some 35,000 of the poorest and most depraved in the metropolis, there are also many who live beyond its limits. In the Opera House where you could find one object which would tend to plant cynicism in your brain, here you would find fifty. Those you meet there are the depraved rich and aristocratical who make no pretence to respectability of life, who are not only utterly selfish without disguise, but consider themselves generous in squandering money on their own pleasures. In the Almonry you will find none but the poorest and most degraded, many of whom will perform the most beautiful acts of charity, long-suffering and forgiveness. And yet, connected with the 35,000 inhabitants are a body of some thirty or forty individuals, not only rich—perhaps as much so as your frequenters and patrons of the Italian Opera—but who esteem themselves the while, and are

esteemed by others, as the very salt of the earth, as the most pious of the pious, the most honest of the honest, the most benevolent of the benevolent, and the most virtuous of the virtuous — the Westminster Abbey capitular body. Their benevolence is never bestowed on their fellow-parishioners, who pay them some fifty thousand a year for spiritual instruction and consolation which is never given by them. Their total indifference to the spiritual welfare of their tenants is shown not only by their refusing to supply them with anything but a mockery of religious instruction, but so jealous also are they of their rights and privileges, that they are now taking legal proceedings against some Nonconformists who have had the audacity to introduce the Bible into the locality without their permission. Their respect for morality is so small, that they have more infamous houses on that one estate, and more poor wretched inmates, than could be found on a space of ground the same size in all England; and in acts of charity they are so mean that they positively allow their poor tenants to be taxed to support each other in their misery, while the houses in which they themselves live are relieved from all parochial

taxation, nor do they attempt to alleviate by private charity the dense misery existing around them. But come and see me, and exaggerated as you may consider my remarks, I promise you that I will prove them not to be half as severe as the occasion warrants."

We had now arrived at Westminster Bridge, and I bade Dr. Watson good night, promising to call on him the first evening I was at liberty.

CHAPTER XXII.

I GRADUATE IN CYNICISM.

For two or three days after the dinner at Greenwich, I did not see anything of my uncle the editor, and I then called on him with the notice I had written of a new opera which had been performed the previous Saturday evening. Nor had I seen Pills in the interim. In fact, I had purposely abstained from seeing either, as I knew a meeting would be painful to my uncle after his almost, if not quite, inebriated state at the dinner, and scarcely less so to Pills, who, as I was certain, felt sorely the excess his brother had been foolish enough to indulge in. When I went into the editor's room I found my uncle busy writing at his table, and as I was well aware he did not like to be disturbed on those occasions, I seated myself in a chair and re-

mained there till he had finished. He then looked at me steadfastly for moment, and an expression of shame appeared on his features which fairly went to my heart. I thought it would only be kind if I attempted to turn his thoughts to some other subject, and I asked him whether he would like a report of a concert which was about to be given at the Hanover Square Rooms.

"No, thank you, my boy," he replied. "With what you have brought I have enough copy for my next impression. Have you seen Pills since Sunday?"

"I have not, uncle," I said. "I purpose calling on him this evening."

"How did you get up from Greenwich last Sunday?"

"I came with Dr. Watson," I replied. "We hired a boat together, and the rest returned in the glass coach. I have not seen either of them since."

"You must have had a pleasant time of it with Watson," remarked my uncle. "He is in my opinion a very intelligent companion, and full of information, ungainly as he looks. Did he say what sort of an evening he had spent?"

I knew perfectly well this was a mere fishing question on the part of my uncle, and had I been willing to bite at the bait, I really had nothing to tell him on the subject I knew he was interested in—Watson's remarks on his inebriated state—not a word having been spoken of it by either of us. I told him, what was really the fact, that we had conversed principally on the greater development of charity among the poor than among the rich, the instances I had seen of it at the Opera House, while he, on his part, told me of the wonderfully kind deeds he had noticed among the poor and degraded who are crowded together near the hospital he lived in; that he also gave me an invitation to visit him, which I intended doing some evening.

"You will be much interested," said my uncle. "He knows all the locality around him as well as the district surveyor himself, though, perhaps, you may occasionally find him somewhat prejudiced. But visit him by all means, and the information you may acquire by it, even if useless now, may be made something of when you little expect it. This has often been the case with me."

I promised my uncle to follow his advice, and

after a little more conversation on general subjects I left him, having quite removed the feeling of shame which evidently oppressed him when we first met.

I went behind the scenes at the Opera that evening, where I noticed nothing worth recording, beyond the fact that the girl, Elena Pistruccia, was absent, and on inquiring the reason was informed she had not been there for the last ten days, but none knew the cause, most probably she was ill. The following day I resolved to pay my visit to Dr. Watson. The Westminster Hospital was then at the western extremity of York Street, and was in appearance a very different building to the new one since erected in the Broad Sanctuary. It was a low, ungainly looking edifice, which had originally been constructed out of a couple of small two-storied houses, and afterwards other most incommodious buildings had been added to it in the rear. I found the doctor in the dispensary, a small room by the side of the entrance door. He seemed much pleased to see me, and ushered me into his sitting room on the first floor. Here, for some time, we conversed together on different common-place subjects, and then I mentioned to

him my uncle's advice to call on him, as he would be able to give me much valuable information as to the manner the poor were treated on the estates of the Dean and Chapter at Westminster, assuring me that I should hear of things worth remembering.

"That you certainly will if you have sufficient patience to go thoroughly into the matter," said Dr. Watson. "I think I can show you a state of things existing in this nineteenth century in the heart of Protestant London, and in a locality with a heavy staff of clergy, supported by the enormous revenues arising from it, that could not be matched, or anything like it, in Rome during the most corrupt era of the Papal Church, nor in any other Christian denomination. In fact, if you follow your uncle's advice, and go at any length into the subject, it is more than probable you will end by being as confirmed a cynic as he is."

"That would not be a very difficult matter," I said, "after the training I have had at the Opera. But first answer me one question which I cannot understand. You said the other evening that a very large proportion of the scene shifters, carpenters, and property men, &c.,

attached to our theatre, reside in the lower parts of Westminster, and when in sickness, or suffering from wounds and injuries, apply here for relief, and that the principal artists have been liberal contributors to your hospital. How is it that they live in Westminster instead of nearer to their work?"

"That question is very easily answered," said Dr. Watson. "Formerly they did live near the theatre, but on the formation of Regent Street they, with thousands of others, were driven over into these parts, and are, from want of house accommodation, obliged to live here. But to return to the inhabitants of the Almonry and the estates adjoining it. Their gross population on these estates, almost all of whom are poor, numbered at the last census no fewer than 56,695 souls. For a description of the condition in which they live I will quote from a newspaper* respecting these poor people:—'Close under the towers of the Abbey of Westminster there lie concealed labyrinths of lanes, courts, alleys and slums, nests of ignorance, vice, depravity and crime, as well as squalor, wretchedness

* *Patriot*, June, 1841.

and disease, whose atmosphere is typhus, whose ventilation is cholera, in which swarms a huge and almost countless population, haunts of filth which no sewage committee can reach, dark corners which no lighting board can brighten. In the Almonry and its neighbourhood are no fewer than 114 infamous houses, and that without counting gin shops, all the property of the Church. Did you (the Dean and Chapter) ever observe the notorious character of these your tenants? Did you step in and warn them, and expostulate with them, and entreat them to seek for pardon and the salvation of their souls? Your answer, if a truthful one, must be, "No, never." But I, in company with some members of the City Mission have gone from house to house, and can tell you the number of wretched females kept by each of your tenants and your under-tenants, and we can give you the names of each. We can tell you of the dreadful mortality among these unhappy beings, so that few, after they have been drawn into these wretched dens, are hardly ever known to live for three years. We can tell you the history of many of these poor creatures. Then look at another class of your parishioners.

Do you not know that there are gangs of thieves and coiners in the district referred to, residing in fraternities of three, five, ten, fifteen, twenty, all joining together in league, many of them being brought up as thieves and coiners, and the girls as worse? If you doubt what I say, go to Mr. Lowry, the Superintendent of Police, and ask him to take you to their houses and give you their paternity, their ages, their history, how often they (the younger among them) had been in the House of Correction before they were fourteen years of age, and how often in prison since, and how many of their companions have been transported or hanged in days gone by. He can tell you how they have progressed in crime since childhood, doing what is technically called "prigging" from barrows, stalls, and shops, until they have become expert pickpockets and daring thieves. But are these the only guilty ones? Have you (the Dean and Chapter) and your predecessors possessed wealth, and talent, and leisure, and influence, and yet neglected these your neighbours, your parishioners, men whose blood is the same kind as your own? Yes, you have treated them with utter indifference, and they have from childhood

grown up upon the same spot close to you from generation to generation without an effort on your part to save them—all has been left to the police officer, the gaoler, the executioner.' *

"But you must not imagine," continued Dr. Watson, "that the whole of the poor inhabitants are of the same demoralized description. On the contrary, many among them lead most honourable lives notwithstanding the temptations and bad examples which surround them. But of that, however, you will be able to form a better opinion after you have visited some of the more populous parts, for I presume that you, in common with most other respectable people, know but little about it."

* The above description, quoted from the *Patriot* newspaper, was brought under the notice of the House of Lords by Earl Fitzhardinge. The truth of the statement having been vehemently denied by certain of the Bench of Bishops then present, the subject was adjourned for a week. When resumed, Lord Fitzhardinge stated that, since the last debate he had carefully visited the whole locality and found the description given a perfectly truthful one. Further inquiries were made without in the least shaking his lordship's evidence, and the result was that, almost the whole of the buildings on the Church Estates were destroyed, 40,000 poor people were driven from the neighbourhood, and the present Victoria Street was afterwards carried out.

I told Dr. Watson that in my case his conclusion was a perfectly correct one. It is true that my uncle had taken me with him to visit the home of a dying bricklayer's labourer, but that comprised all the experience I had obtained on the subject. At the same time I could easily conclude that there were honest and respectable people among them, notwithstanding the dense misery which surrounded them.

"But before we start," said Dr. Watson, "there is another subject I wish to bring under your notice in order that you may arrive at a right conclusion as to the injustice practised on the poor of the locality. Although the Dean and Chapter receive some £35,000 a-year from their tenants in the Almonry, irrespective of the value of their own private dwellings, they oblige these poor tenants to maintain and relieve the destitute, and in fact, all the paupers residing on their estate, by means of the rate levied on their houses by the Poor Law, while they (the Dean and Chapter) claim, under some old law, exemption from all rates and contributions, and strictly maintain their exemption."

"But possibly," I remarked, "by their personal charity they give voluntarily more than they

would have paid had they been as completely subject to the Poor Law as their tenants."

"My dear fellow you prove by that remark that you know nothing whatever about the matter. So far to the contrary. Of their indulgence in the virtue of charity, if any conclusion can be drawn from their behaviour, it would rather seem that they accepted it as a legal sort of hint that private charity would appear as a want of respect to the example set them by government. Understand me, however, I am merely speaking of them in their corporate capacity; individually I have occasionally met with some very kind-hearted men among them. Nor are they as a body much more liberal to those of their own cloth whom they engage to perform the duties they leave undone. According to a letter which appeared in the same newspaper, which is allowed to be a perfectly truthful one, after having spoken somewhat harshly of the habits of the one clergyman engaged to look after the spiritual welfare of, and perform all the ecclesiastical duties for, the 35,000 inhabitants of the Almonry, the writer continues:—'But gently; do not let me do this poor man any injustice. Consider the labours he performed and the pay he received.

In addition to all the duties I have enumerated, there was the burying of the dead, reading the prayers all through two or three times on a Sunday, and often on a week day, and that meeting him one Easter Sunday evening he said, "Oh, Lord! I have been praying ever since I was out of bed, until I have almost prayed my inside out." And all for what? About £100 per annum.* The fact is you (the Dean and Chapter) look after the fleece, and leave one of your body whom you appointed to do the work, to look after the sheep.'

"Before we begin our visitation," continued Dr. Watson, "come with me into the Board Room and I will prove to you that, objectionable as are many of the incidents you meet with among the singers and dancers and their patrons at the Opera, that 'most excellent gift of charity' among the two former is carried to an extent which would rather surprise some of our Pharisees were it more generally known. Certainly if

* His emoluments were occasionally increased, especially in winter, by performing early service in the Abbey for the canon or minor canon on duty, receiving as an average for each service the sum of two shillings. (The revenue of the capitular body being at least £35,000 a-year.)

charity covers a multitude of sins, I think you will admit that so many of theirs are cancelled in Heaven's chancery as to render their spiritual condition much more on a par with those of the Right Reverend (if that is the proper title) body of whom I have been speaking. This hospital, as I think I told you before, is the only institution they have for dispensing medical and surgical relief to the poor. I also told you that there resided among us a considerable number of the scene-shifters, carpenters and other subordinates of the Italian Opera House, and that they, the artists, had contributed most liberally to the charity, not only for these, but for the poor generally. As yet you have had only my word for it. Now come and judge for yourself."

Dr. Watson now led the way to the Board Room, and around the walls were various boards containing the names of different donors to the charity, the amounts given, and the dates. The earliest that I remarked was in the year 1785, in which the sum of £1,000 was presented as the profits of a concert given by the Italian Opera Company; and the following year there was another presentation of £1,800. There was a lapse of a few years, and then another for

£1,500. Then came smaller sums for £200—£100, and in 1790 another £1,400. Catalani gave a concert in 1809 for the benefit of the hospital, and paid the whole of the other singers and all expenses, and then gave the receipts to the hospital. Then some years afterwards she gave another which yielded a larger profit, and then another, the profits reaching to £1,286. Altogether I made the whole sum amount to about £12,000, or £14,000.*

"And now let us see," continued Dr. Watson, "during the same number of years how much the Dean and Chapter have contributed to the funds of the hospital, the principal portion of whose duties it is to care for their sick and

* It must not be imagined that the above list comprises all the benefits the hospital has from time to time received from the singers of Her Majesty's Theatre. Large sums have also been presented by Giulia Grisi, Mario, Tamborini, Lablache, and others when engaged at that theatre. Nor is the liberality of foreign singers yet extinct. The late much respected Lady Augusta Stanley, shortly before her death, established in the hospital not only a trained staff of nurses, but a school for probationers as well. In aid of the funds necessary to carry out her project Mme. Nillsson contributed the profits of three concerts she gave in its behalf, amounting to no less than £2,700.

wounded tenants, and naturally those who occasion the greatest drain on the hospital resources. Well, you will find there is but one entry, and that is for £20, although they received from their tenants during the time no less than £280,000. Occasionally, I admit, different members contributed liberal subscriptions and preached charity sermons for its support, but apart from rare legacies, the whole did not amount to one tithe of that given us by the Opera singers, and this without counting many of their acts of private benevolence."

As evening was fast approaching we now left the hospital to visit the locality in which existed so fearful a state of poverty and demoralization, Watson remarking that, as the weather was warm and fine, and the labours of the day over, we should find a large proportion of the population in the streets and alleys, and that I should thus be the better able to judge of their condition. We proceeded up York Street till we had reached the Broadway, when we saw a crowd of at least one hundred persons, the majority of these being unfortunate women, listening to a man standing on a chair, who was addressing them with great earnestness, and

who, Dr. Watson told me, was no other than Boatswain Smith, a city missionary of some celebrity at the time. He principally addressed the female portion of his hearers, on whom his arguments seemed to have a very powerful effect, at least judging from the tears running down the cheeks of many of them. The missionary possessed considerable eloquence, although somewhat of a rough description. On speaking of this to Dr. Watson as we moved on, he remarked that these poor wretches as a rule paid great attention and respect to ministers of religion of all denominations, and were most grateful to them for a kind word.

"But after all they do no good," continued the doctor. "As you saw, there was no lack of genuine repentance among those collected around that man. In a couple of hours, or immediately after the next taste of gin all the good effects he produced at the time will have vanished, and they will be no better than they were before they heard him."

"Why so?" I inquired.

"Gin, my dear fellow, gin. It is the great solace of these poor creatures when their mind is in pain. And they have no other. A short

time since some Nonconformist body, I entirely forget of what denomination, hired a large workshop in the very centre of one of the most depraved localities, for the purpose of collecting these poor wretches together, and then preaching to them, and offering good advice and assistance to any who were anxious to quit their present mode of life. The experiment proved a complete success. They attended in crowds, and many were provided with respectable employment, others restored to their friends, and some were assisted to emigrate. As all this was done without any expenditure of time, labour or money to the capitular body, it might have been expected that they would have wished the enterprise every success, if not have aided in the good work. Such, however, would have been a most erroneous conclusion. So far from even being indifferent in the matter, they positively commenced legal proceedings against the owner of the workshop for the forfeiture of his lease. The cause is still going on, and it is almost a certainty that they will gain the day."

"But upon what plea?" I inquired, greatly astonished.

"They stand upon a clause in their leases,"

replied Dr. Watson, "that they should be forfeited in case the lessees should sub-let any part of their holding for any Nonconformist place of worship or meeting-house, or for any religious purposes not of the Church of England."

"But has there been no expression of public opinion adverse to such a proceeding?" I inquired.

"Oh! yes, but without much effect. One of the canons preaching in St. Margaret's Church, speaking of these proceedings as emanating from Nonconformists,* said:—"Speaking of these Dissenters, although I may hurt the feelings of some present, I have no hesitation in saying that the same mercy, and no more, may be expected hereafter by the schismatic as by the adulterer or the thief. It is no excuse to be born of schismatics. God will make as much allowance—and it is to be feared no more—in the case of the hereditary schismatic as in the case of the hereditary adulterer or thief, that is one trained of such parents." And yet that reverend gentleman was 'your most obedient servant to command' of more than one of the

* *Globe*, 14th Dec. 1841.

noblemen who patronize the *artistes* of the Italian Opera."

"To whom do the public-houses belong?" I asked.

"To the Dean and Chapter, and other ecclesiastical bodies, of course," replied Dr. Watson.

"If they did nothing else they might close some of these," I remarked, "for there appear to be more public-houses than any other trades."

"Quite true," he said. "But although they will energetically exert themselves to abolish a Dissenting meeting house or mission room, they will not take any steps to shut up a gin palace. These are, in fact, the most valuable property they have. There is one thing, however, to be said in their favour," Dr. Watson continued, laughing, "the aid they give to the advancement of medical science. Not only do they afford plenty of practice for our pupils, but they are indirectly of great use in supplying our dissecting rooms with subjects."*

* Some idea of the demoralization caused by the gin shops in the district may be formed by the fact that during two successive ordinary weeks the number of out-patients treated by the assistant surgeons from the effects of drunken-

We had now reached the entrance of a very narrow alley, when Dr. Watson whispered in my ear,—

"This is one of the worst localities in the whole district, into which any man who is not as well known as I am would be a fool to enter knowingly. I am privileged, as they are all aware I am the hospital doctor, and are very civil and respectful. Let me give you a hint. Do not seem to be surprised at anything you may see. As you are with me they will take you for a doctor and be civil enough. It is surprising what a favourite a well-known medical man is among them. Some time since I went through the place to see a case I was interested in, and on coming back some one touched me on the arm, and presenting me with my own pocket-handkerchief, said, 'I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know that you were the doctor.' He had taken the handkerchief as I went to visit my patient, and some one afterwards told him who I was. But to change the subject. You may

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ness and immorality, were respectively 49 and 52 per cent. These were irrespective of wounds from assaults and street fights.

imagine what the reputation of the locality we are about to visit is from this narrow alley leading to it being known in the neighbourhood as 'Hell Fire Passage.'"

Although the passage was crowded with very disreputable looking characters, through whom with some difficulty we made our way, we received neither incivility nor rude remark from any. At the same time I could easily perceive that I personally was rather indebted to Dr. Watson's escort, than from any respect for my appearance. More than one among them cast on me a very scrutinizing glance as if to ascertain whether I had anything about me worth stealing. As soon, however, as they caught sight of Watson, who seemed to be, by sight at least, perfectly well known to all, they took no further notice of me, and I soon became accustomed to them. On quitting the passage we found ourselves in a small court in the centre of the most squalid looking habitations I had ever seen in my life. They were all one-storied, narrow, and with scarcely a window in them that had more than one whole pane of glass in it, the others being stuffed up with rags of the most filthy description. The court was crowded

with men and women, if possible more disreputable looking than those we found in the passage leading to it. The attention of the greater number was concentrated on two women who were quarrelling in one corner. One was a fat, bloated creature, of what age it would be difficult to say, except that judging from the dark colour of her hair she could not be very old; the other a tall bony looking virago, perhaps some forty years of age. The abuse they were heaping on each other, was of the most repulsive description, so much so that I wished to get out of earshot if I could, but to my surprise Watson paid no particular attention to it, but led me up to the group that surrounded the women, and then for a moment stood motionless watching them. Suddenly the tall virago stopped short in her abuse, and, with her eyes cast down, uttered not a word in reply to the other. Then Watson turned quietly away, without any particular expression on his countenance, and continued his way to an alley opposite the one by which we had entered the court, and which led into a narrow street of somewhat more respectable appearance, though still bad enough. The population here had more of the genuine

working class about them than those we had just left, and I felt rather more at ease.

"Did you notice that tall woman?" asked Dr. Watson. "If you did, you have perhaps come to the conclusion that there cannot be one feeling of honourable womanhood left in her; yet you would be mistaken. Perhaps you have not forgotten the anecdote I told you the other evening at Greenwich about a drunken woman who had taken pity on a poor wretched man dying from cancer. Well that virago was the woman."

I made some remarks on the general appearance of the court, and Dr. Watson told me it was one of the worst localities in Westminster, although there were several others nearly as bad. "And unfortunately their evil influence is not confined to the localities themselves, but is also a great detriment to others, such as the street we are now in, which is almost entirely occupied by the industrious working classes. They are a source of perpetual anxiety to the respectable working women who reside near them, and the pains they take to keep their children from associating with the children of thieves and disreputable women is above all praise. But, in spite of all their care, many are

led away by bad examples. Some instances have come under my notice which are exceedingly painful. For example, the wife of a journeyman carpenter had two sons, twins about fourteen years of age. One of these got acquainted with some young thieves residing in the court, and in a short time was arrested on a charge of theft; the other, who was employed as a shopboy, continued honest. The young thief's imprisonment over, he returned home; but a short time afterwards his old acquaintances found him and induced him to join them. Nothing more was heard of him for more than a year, when he was again arrested on a charge of theft. As he had been previously convicted there was almost a certainty that he would be sentenced to a lengthened imprisonment, the anticipation of which nearly broke the poor woman's heart. The other son, who was much attached to his mother, determined to save him if he could. For this purpose, without giving her any notice of his intention, he attended at the police court and stated that a mistake had been made, that he had committed the theft, and not his brother. His reason for adopting this course was, that as nothing was known to

his prejudice he would get off, like all such first offences, with a short imprisonment, while his brother, from his previous conviction, would be committed for trial and receive a severe sentence. The result was his being imprisoned for two months. But the worst is to follow. On his release from prison his old employer would not take him back, nor could he find another situation, and consequently he also turned thief. The poor woman thus lost both her sons. What became of her I know not, but most probably she left the neighbourhood, for I have not seen her for some months."

I will not fatigue my readers with any lengthened description of the different localities we visited; all were either inhabited by the working classes or by a poor population of a totally different description, and occasionally they resided so closely together that it was almost impossible to trace a line of demarcation between them. Many of the anecdotes given me by the doctor of the different scenes and occurrences which had come under his notice were exceedingly interesting, especially those which tended to prove that even among the lowest and most depraved instances of an ex-

quisite charitable feeling might frequently be detected. Some of the adventures, too, which he narrated might, if amplified, be worked into novels of thrilling interest. The scenes through which we passed, notwithstanding their squalid poverty, were not without interest. This stamp of poverty seemed to be impressed on all, and with one exception, even upon the tradesmen's shops, and how their owners ever contrived to obtain a living from them was a problem too difficult for me to solve; the exception alluded to being the public-houses, which seemed to drive a roaring trade.

After all, perhaps I am wrong in saying the publican's was the only trade which flourished in the district—there was another which was, however, almost a monopoly. As we were entering one of the low courts we met a shabby, dissipated-looking lame man, who had one of those ignoble gin-sodden countenances so common in the locality. To my surprise, as the fellow touched his hat, Dr. Watson nodded to him and said, "Well, Phillips, have you been looking out for a prize?"

Phillips grinned and said, "I've got one in my eye, and shall get it, or at least I'm

pretty sure. I want to oblige Mr. Dermott if I can."

Watson made no reply, and we passed on.

"Now, in twenty guesses I am sure you will not hit upon that fellow's business," he said to me.

"Beyond feeling convinced from his appearance it is nothing very respectable," I replied, "I think it more than probable you are right."

"Well, that gentleman's occupation consists in finding subjects for the dissecting rooms. He formerly did a good stroke of business, but the Anatomy Bill which passed a few years ago has diminished his profits very considerably. Still, I suspect he does not make a bad speculation of it even now."

"But if you have only one churchyard in the district, how can that be?" I inquired.

"My dear fellow, there are many who die in these localities who do not encumber our churchyards, especially those who poison themselves in fits of despair. Nothing is more common for a poor woman when she is three parts drunk to poison herself or throw herself into the river. On the latter cases coroner's inquests are generally held, and they are buried; but with the

poison cases these very seldom occur. I believe I have had more poison cases in the course of one year than any ten members of the profession in London. However, some day I will show you our book—a register of casual cases—and you can then judge for yourself. I have become by constant practice so expert in curing poisoning by laudanum that I am quite proud of my success."

Dr. Watson now related many instances of the terrible effects of alcohol on the brain of those poor women who had been inveigled into the noisome dens to be found within the precincts of the Almonry and other church lands immediately surrounding, and which, though interesting enough in themselves, some of them having the pathetic too much mixed up with the horrible, are not adapted for these pages, while others, on the contrary, I shall have on a future occasion to allude to. Our conversation continued till we had reached the Broad Sanctuary, when, bidding me farewell, he returned to his duties at the hospital.

Being now so near the house of my uncle Pills, I determined to pay him a visit. I found him at home, seated in his little room at the

back of the shop. Although he expressed himself pleased to see me, I could easily perceive he was out of spirits; but for some time he said nothing that offered me any clue as to the cause. After conversing with him for about half an hour, the subject being the visit I had made to the Almonry with Dr. Watson and the sights I had there witnessed, I took up my hat to depart, when he said somewhat abruptly to me,

"Have you seen anything of my brother since the dinner at Greenwich?"

"Only on one occasion, and then but for a few minutes," I replied.

"Did he appear to you in good health?" he inquired.

"I saw nothing in him to induce me to believe to the contrary," I said; "but, as I said before, I was with him for a few minutes only. I trust you have not heard otherwise."

"From him I have certainly heard nothing," said my uncle; "but from my own observation I am afraid he is in a bad state of health. That unfortunate habit he has acquired, and of which you saw some of the effects at Greenwich, will, I am afraid, first drive him into a lunatic asylum, and shortly afterwards into the grave. I have

lately remarked in him several premonitory symptoms of insanity."

"But why then do you not warn him of the fate in store for him?" I inquired. "He cannot be aware of it himself, and he would no doubt listen to you with attention on a subject of the kind, although any remarks from another would merely excite his anger without any good arising from it. Now pray do point out to him the terrible risk he is running."

"That he might listen to me with patience," said Pills, "is very possible, but I am afraid no good will result from it. I shall try it, however."

"What makes you think you will not succeed?"

"Because his intemperance," said Pills, "is of that description in which a cure is almost an impossibility. He has acquired the habit of stimulating the brain by small doses of brandy, not sufficient to produce intoxication, but enough to keep his mind in an abnormal state of excitement, and the moment the stimulus ceases his energy of mind sinks along with it. You must not imagine, however, that the condition in which you saw him at Greenwich is of frequent

occurrence. On the contrary, I have not heard of his having given way to such an extent for more than a year. Besides that, I believe he is thoroughly ashamed of the figure he then made. For all that I fear the habit is too strong in him to be got over. How did he receive you when you last saw him?"

"Well, to tell you the truth he appeared as if he were somewhat ashamed to see me," I replied, "but I may have been mistaken."

"On the contrary," said Pills, "I have no doubt you are quite right. Poor fellow, he is fully aware of his failing, but cannot break himself of it. I wish you would visit him more frequently; it would be an advantage to both of you. It might keep him under greater restraint, and would give you a good insight into the working of the office, so that if he were to leave town for a few weeks you might take his place. I know he has great faith in you."

I promised my uncle I would follow his advice, and I then returned home.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PROMOTED TO THE EDITORIAL CHAIR.

THE next day I called on my uncle the editor, and found him seated in his easy chair, the table before him being covered with papers, on which were several unopened letters. My first glance at his face told me he was very ill, nor did he attempt to conceal it when I spoke on the subject. Besides being very flushed, the expression on his countenance was one rather of bewilderment than of anything else, while his hands trembled so violently that I much doubt if he could have held a pen had he tried to do so. For some moments he did not answer my inquiries respecting his health; then suddenly said,

"I am very pleased to see you, my dear boy, very much so indeed, for you may render me this morning much assistance if you have a little time to spare."

I told him that my time was perfectly at his service, and he then requested me to open the different letters lying on the table, and read their contents, for his eyesight, he said, was very bad. I obeyed him, and went through a number of letters and newspaper reports, all of which would be uninteresting to the reader, and which appeared also in the same light to my uncle, or perhaps I might rather say, that he seemed to have great difficulty in fixing his mind on the different subjects I brought under his notice. When I had finished he asked me to call the next day and render him some service, in fact, assist him in getting up the next impression of his newspaper. This I did, and so much to his satisfaction, that he requested me for the future to assist him regularly in his duties, he offering me a liberal salary for so doing.

As day by day went on, instead of recovering his health, it evidently became worse, till at last I thought it necessary to have an interview with Pills on the subject. When I saw him I narrated as well as I could the symptoms I had remarked in my uncle's state of health, and the full conviction I was under that insanity was evidently developing itself. Pills inquired my

reasons for coming to that conclusion, and I told him that, although I was ignorant on subjects of the kind, it appeared to me that my uncle exhibited a difficulty in centralizing and fixing his thoughts on anything under consideration. I thought he was aware of this difficulty and seemed ashamed of it. That occasionally it would certainly disappear, but generally after he had left the room for a few moments, on which occasions I much suspected he had applied to stimulants for support.

"I am afraid," said Pills in reply, "that your conclusion is a correct one. I have myself noticed the difficulty he has in centralizing his thoughts, and that is a very alarming symptom. I think I will candidly tell him that his better plan will be to retire to some asylum for a short time, not in the position of a patient, but simply that he may be under the care of some man skilled in cerebral diseases, who, in a short time will, if he follow his instructions, enable him to return again to his duties. And to this it is more than probable my brother will agree without any hesitation, as you are now sufficiently well versed in the duties of his office to carry them on during his absence. I will call on him

this evening and mention this proposal to him. At the same time unless he presses you, which I do not think at all probable, you had better not let him know that you have seen me."

The next morning on my arrival at the office, my uncle, after receiving me in a very friendly manner, said to me,

"I now want you, my dear boy, to do me a very great favour, and one perfectly in your power to accomplish. I have felt very unwell lately and my nerves are quite unstrung; in fact, I am in such a condition that Pills told me yesterday evening that if I did not retire to some quiet place in the country I should soon become incurable. Now, as you are as well up in the duties of the office as I am myself, I propose to entrust them to you during my absence. You can correspond with me as frequently as you please, and I shall be very happy to advise you on any difficult points that may come under your notice. Of course I need hardly say I am willing to pay you fully for your services."

I expressed my regret at the unfavourable state of his health, and that I sincerely hoped by a short residence in the country, apart from

the anxieties of his office, he would soon be restored, and it would then give me great pleasure to abdicate to him again the editorial chair. He smiled at this poor attempt at a joke, and then I went on with the duties of the office, nothing worthy of notice occurring the while. The next morning I did not see him, he being occupied in making preparations for his departure. In the evening Pills called on me to inform me that the following day he had agreed to introduce my uncle to the principal physician of Shirley Hall Asylum, where, till further orders, I was to address him, and that until his return the office would remain under my management.

It now being the autumn and the Italian Opera closed, I had no musical criticisms to occupy me, and for a short time the Opera itself was completely driven from my thoughts by other matters of more importance. Indeed, so closely was I engaged with my duties that I had not even time to call on Pills or Dr. Watson, although I frequently had an earnest wish to do so. One morning, however, I received a letter from Dr. Watson saying that if I had sufficient leisure to pay him a visit in the afternoon he

would be greatly obliged to me, as he was then much interested in a case in which he was certain I could afford him great assistance. In a postscript he further begged me to come that day if I possibly could, for if I delayed it longer my visit to him would be comparatively useless.

I must say I was somewhat puzzled what to do with respect to Dr. Watson's letter. I wished to oblige him if I could, but that afternoon I had much to attend to. I was upon the point of sending the office messenger to ask if it would be possible to put off my visit till the next day, but then again I felt my curiosity piqued at the somewhat mysterious nature of his letter. What he could want me for I was at a loss to guess. His mind was totally absorbed in medical and scientific matters, and on these subjects no boy of eighteen could be more ignorant than myself. At length I determined I would put aside my other engagements and pay him a visit.

When I met him the first thing he said to me was, "You formerly wished for a proof of the affinity which occasionally existed between the Opera House and the poorer parts of Westminster, and I have now one to offer you. I have a poor

wretched creature, an Italian woman, as patient, fearfully ill with dropsy, who, apart from her malady, is labouring under some terrible distress of mind, which she tries to explain to me, but with little success inasmuch as she cannot speak one word of English, nor do I know much more of Italian. Of course with respect to her malady I can manage that myself, but as I feel great pity for the poor creature's distress, you would greatly oblige me if you will accompany me to her room and explain what may be her troubles."

Without any hesitation I agreed to go with the doctor, and a few minutes afterwards we were on our way through the crowded streets of the Almonry and Westminster proper, till we had reached a small disreputable looking alley. Here we stopped at the door of probably the most miserable looking house in the place, and Dr. Watson then led me upstairs into a room, in which I found a large unhealthy looking woman, scantily dressed, and apparently in a half comatose state, seated on a dirty truckle bedstead, and leaning her head against the wall. When aroused by the doctor into something like consciousness, after looking at him for a

moment she turned her eyes on me, and gazing steadily at me she exclaimed "*Dio santo, non è possibile!*"

Great, however, as was the expression of surprise on the woman's countenance, it was scarcely less than that, which, in all probability was on my own. This poor wretched creature whom I saw in that lamentable condition was no other than my old friend Grandolfi whose acquaintance the reader may remember I had made on my journey with the opera company from Milan to Padua.

For some moments not a word was spoken by either of us, but when recovering from her surprise and looking at me in an attitude almost of prayer, she burst into a violent fit of sobbing. I begged her to calm herself and tell me what was the matter with her. Two or three times she attempted to speak, but her sorrow, combined with her earnestness, was so great it appeared impossible for her to finish intelligibly one single sentence. Dr. Watson now endeavoured to console her, though ineffectually, and the only reply she made to him was to seize his hand and kiss it earnestly, telling me at the same time that he was like an angel to her. I

continued my efforts to calm her, when Dr. Watson said to me,

"I think it is better in all these cases to let a woman exhaust herself without reasoning with her; then afterwards she will be the better able to understand what is proposed for her benefit."

I followed his advice, and remained quietly standing at her side, she, at the time, with all the violent gesticulations of a second or third rate Italian singer, bewailing her unhappy lot. Then turning suddenly to me she said, in Italian,

"No woman in this world loved a child better than I loved mine. I would have walked barefoot all over London to have done her any good, but it has pleased God to take her, and that without my being near her the while. She is in heaven now, but why have they robbed me of her!"

I translated what she had said to the doctor, and asked if he could give me any explanation respecting her.

"Her daughter?" said Dr. Watson. "I know nothing of the daughter." Then after a moment's consideration he continued, "Ask her what sort of a girl she was."

"She was about fifteen years old, and though very thin, was beautiful as an angel," replied the woman to my inquiry. "She danced at the Italian Opera House, but three weeks ago was taken ill of a fever and sent to the hospital. I tried to nurse her here but you may easily perceive it was impossible; and what was worse my legs are so bad I was unable to leave home to visit her. Well, poor thing, it has pleased God to take her, but I cannot discover what they 've done with her. Ask the doctor if he can tell you."

"We have had an Italian girl die of fever in the hospital lately," replied the doctor in answer to what I translated to him. "Inquire what her name was."

"Elena Pestrucci," said Grandolfi.

Before giving Dr. Watson's reply it would perhaps be better to narrate what had occurred to poor Grandolfi since I last saw her on a certain memorable night opposite a *café* in Pavia, singing Ricci's air of *Oggi qua, Oggi qua domani la.* She was accompanied by a man with a guitar, and a young girl who carried in her hand a sort of tin saucer in which she collected the contributions of the customers. The

reader will remember that it was the night of my poor Clelia's death, and this painful event drove from my mind all interest in Grandolfi, if not her very existence, and I bestowed but little thought upon what degree of relationship or intimacy existed between her and her companions. Had I, however, made any inquiries about her I might have learnt that which would have renewed my good feelings for her, and that without lowering my respect for her prudence, which, from her Bohemian and careless course of life, might have been somewhat difficult to accomplish. From what I gathered from her, and at several meetings afterwards, she appears to have supported till his death her old *Babbo* as she called him, the old blind husband of the dancer who had taken her from the Foundling Hospital, when a very young child, and adopted her as her daughter, She proved, as I have already shown, a most dutiful and loving child, in fact if she had been their own instead of an adopted daughter, her conduct could not have been more exemplary.

Her *Babbo's* death was not only a source of great sorrow to Grandolfi, but it left a considerable void in her mind which she had much

difficulty in filling. Hitherto, notwithstanding the thousand and one flirtations which she had practised, some of them approaching very nearly, perhaps, to real affection, there was always so much of the theatre mixed up witb them as to deprive them of their genuine reality. With her in almost every action of her life, with the exception of her love for her *Babbo* and his wife, there were always the footlights before her, and she now felt the craving for an attachment of a more natural, if not holy description. At length the idea occurred, possibly unconsciously to herself, that she, on her part, would attempt to repay to heaven the kindness she, when a helpless orphan without a friend or protector in the world, had received from the old pantomime actor and his wife. To carry out this idea, she applied to the Foundling Hospital in Milan for a young female child to adopt as her own. The managers listened with great attention to her application, and informed her that they would have great pleasure in acceding to her request, provided that all the formalities required were satisfactorily gone through. In the first place, who were her references? Now of all questions which it would have been possible to put to Grandolfi the most

objectionable, less from its difficulty than its indiscretion, was with respect to her references. Sir John Falstaff's dislike to the word security could hardly have been greater. So great was it, that it got entirely the better of her prudence, and she explained to them her opinion of their rudeness, in terms so strong and emphatically rendered, that it would have been hailed with enthusiasm by the gallery of any second rate theatre in Italy. In the case of the directors of the hospital, however, it had a totally different effect, and they not only requested her to leave the room; but further informed her that, if on any future occasion she attempted to trouble them with her presence, they would apply to the police for protection.

In consequence of this rebuff, all thoughts of adopting a child remained in abeyance in Grandolfi's mind, till a circumstance occurred which developed it again as intensely as ever. The season was about to commence at Lodi, and she had been engaged as supplementary contralto, or, in plain English, to take the contralto's part in case of illness or accident. One evening, having nothing to do at the theatre, she determined to visit a travelling circus then in the

town, principally to see the performance of one of the female riders, who lodged in the same house with her, and with whom she had become very intimate. This woman (whose husband, also a circus rider, was engaged in another town) was accompanied by her daughter, a girl about ten years of age, who, in consequence of her being very pretty and intelligent, Grandolfi thought must have resembled herself at the same age. The idea then returned to her, that if she could find an orphan girl with the same attributes she could love her as ardently as she loved herself. In the course of her friend's performances an accident occurred, which resulted in the young girl being thrown entirely on Grandolfi for protection. One of the acts of horsemanship, as they are called, consisted in leaping through three hoops covered with paper. In the two first leaps she succeeded well enough, but in the third the horse, from some unexplained cause, swerved, and the result was that the poor woman fell on the ground, striking her head against the wood-work of the ring, and receiving a fracture to her skull. Assistance was immediately rendered, and she was carried into the stables, where Grandolfi not only joined her, but took charge

of her in the carriage which conveyed her home. Nor did her kind ministrations end there. She attended her unremittingly till her death, which occurred a few days after.

Between the time of the poor woman's accident and death Grandolfi had frequent opportunities for noticing the behaviour of the child Elena, and was much struck with the unceasing care and attention she showed to her mother. All this raised her highly in the opinion of Grandolfi, and this was still further increased by the intense sorrow she exhibited at her death. She now invited the girl to remain under her protection till her father could be communicated with. The fellow, however, took no notice of the letter, and a second was forwarded to him with no better result. In short, he deserted the poor child, leaving her entirely on Grandolfi's hands, for she had no other relative or friend. So far from being displeased with the trust imposed upon her, she accepted it with pleasure, and had Elena been her own daughter she could not have treated her with greater kindness. Nay, more, although on the score of propriety, Grandolfi's can hardly be quoted as a model for a young girl to follow, she watched over her with a care and solicitude

worthy of all praise, never uttering in her presence a word or opinion that the most scrupulous could have objected to, nor allowing her, as far as she was able, to mix with those likely to pervert her mind by bad examples. She also, as I have already stated, attempted to instruct her in the rudiments of music, but the girl showing no ability for that art, she at length relinquished all further attempts as hopeless.

And then misfortune fell upon poor Grandolfi. She caught a violent cold, followed by inflammation of the lungs, from which she recovered with some difficulty. Her voice, however, had suffered severely from her illness, and she sought in vain for another engagement. Her difficulty was also rendered the greater, inasmuch as operas in which contralto voices were required were rapidly going out of fashion in Italy, and, consequently, *artistes* in that line were far less frequently needed. Poor Grandolfi now fell lower and lower in her profession, till at length she was positively reduced to the grade of a street singer. Even this humble occupation would not have been open to her had she not made the acquaintance of an old but skilled guitar player, who proposed that they should enter into part-

nership together, dividing the receipts between them. In this way she continued to live on for two or three years when her partner died. She then formed the acquaintance of some other itinerant musicians, and the result was that at last she left Italy to make her fortune in England, where, from the accounts she had heard of the fabulous wealth of the country, she cherished the idea that she should become rich, and be enabled to return to Italy, where one of her first efforts would be to find a good match for Elena, who was daily in personal appearance becoming more and more attractive. How far her anticipations were realized the reader is already aware.

I explained to Dr. Watson the cause of Grandolfi's great affliction. She had heard, to her intense sorrow, that Elena had died in the hospital, but what had added to her grief was that her body had not been sent back to her, so that she might have it buried according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. She had endeavoured to explain her wishes to Dr. Watson, but as he was incapable of understanding her, she now asked me to inquire the reason for the delay. Watson appeared both astonished and indignant at her statement.

"Why," he exclaimed, "the poor girl's body has been taken away from the hospital by her friends more than two days since, and that to my certain knowledge."

"But, perhaps," I remarked, "it has been taken to a wrong address. Would it not be better for you to make inquiries on the subject."

"To a wrong address!" said Dr. Watson, his anger increasing as he spoke. "Yes, I suspect it has been; but I will put a stop to this scoundrel's behaviour."

"To whom do you allude?" I inquired.

"Do you remember when I was conducting you through the Almonry," he replied, "an ill-looking lame man who spoke to me? I told you he was what is commonly called a resurrection man—that is to say, one of those fellows who supply the dissecting rooms with dead bodies, in which trade he transacted a good deal of business. On my speaking to him, he replied that he was keeping his eye upon a sick person who he did not think would recover, and I have not the slightest doubt this poor girl was the one he had alluded to. However, it is possibly not too late to put a stop to the transaction. Tell the woman I will make every inquiry on the

subject, and let her know this evening with what result."

I explained to Grandolfi what Dr. Watson had said, and also promised that I would personally assist him. I requested her to keep up her courage, as it was more than probable we should succeed in our search, and added, though somewhat contrary to the fact, that perhaps by mistake her daughter's body had been removed to the wrong house, and that if we were successful in finding it, we would have it sent home to her, and every respect should be shown to it. Grandolfi warmly thanked us for our kindness, and Dr. Watson and I then left the house to begin our search.

Fortunately everything succeeded to our satisfaction. The doctor first called at the hospital and sent for the man Phillips, whom he questioned on the subject in a very authoritative manner. The fellow at first seemed somewhat inclined to be rebellious, and said it was a shame to take the bread out of any poor man's mouth. Dr. Watson, however, insisted on being obeyed, but Phillips still hesitated, neither liking to disobey him, nor was he willing to lose the money he should obtain by

his infamous brokerage. At last I put an end to all his doubts by telling him that if he informed us where the body could be found, and we were able to obtain possession of it, I would give him two sovereigns from my own pocket. If, on the other hand, he did not inform us, I would spare neither trouble nor expense in getting him prosecuted for the act he had committed.

The fellow, without further hesitation, told us at what school we should find the body, and thanks to Dr. Watson's exertions and my purse, poor Elena's remains were placed in a respectable coffin and restored to Grandolfi, who wept over the poor child in a manner that fairly went to the heart of both of us. I further told her that I would call the next day and assist in making arrangements for the funeral, so that it might take place according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church which, with all her faults, she firmly respected.

On leaving the house, Watson again said to me, "I dare say you think I ought to take steps for the punishment of that scoundrel Phillips. But the fact is by use we get accustomed to many abuses which, 'ere we knew them we should have held to be infamous. After all the

most disgraceful part of the whole affair is, as I think I told you, that this degrading traffic is carried on here on the estates of the Church, and to a greater extent perhaps than in any other part of London, the owners of these particular estates the while being held to be the most pious and charitable portion of the community."

The following morning I again called on Grandolfi, who appeared to be much more composed in mind than the day before. Another cause of sorrow had, however, occurred to her, which I had not anticipated when I promised that poor Elena should be buried according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church. Such, I was informed, was entirely contrary to the rules and regulations established by the Dean and Chapter for the funeral of persons dying within their precincts, no Catholic burial ground being provided, and no religious ceremony other than that of the Church of England being allowed to be used either in the one solitary church they maintained in a district containing 54,000 inhabitants, or in their churchyard. All I could now do for Grandolfi was to obtain (and that secretly, it being against the rules,) the services of a Roman Catholic priest to perform some

funeral ceremonies over the dead body as it lay in the fetid atmosphere of the poor woman's room, and it was afterwards taken to the parish burial ground where the service of the Church of England was read, certainly with as much respect as it was possible for the one solitary clergyman to exhibit under the immense amount of fatiguing duties he had to perform for the miserable stipend of £100 a year out of a sum of £35,000, which Watson had informed me was the annual revenue of the Dean and Chapter.

After Elena's funeral the health of poor Grandolfi gradually failed. And this I may say, without ostentation, was not without effort on my part to support it. I obtained for her a very respectable lodging in the neighbourhood, to which she was with much difficulty removed. I visited her daily, and to some extent raised her spirits by talking of old times when I knew her in Italy, and the adventures which had occurred to us in our journey from Milan to Padua. At first she told me she had but little spirit to converse on vanities of the kind, but at the same time I remarked she gradually became interested in them. I spoke to her of the adventures of the poor *Ballerini* who had been robbed on their

road to Brescia, and the scene which had taken place at the inn.

"Oh! I remember that very well," she said, "and a circumstance connected with it which you have failed to mention—the kind manner you assisted them in their distress. From that moment I liked you, and have never forgotten it."

I could have reminded her in return that she and others of the poor *troupe* with whom she was connected had each subscribed—proportionate means being taken into consideration—twice as much as I had done myself, my income, as the reader may remember, being then much greater than it was a few years afterwards. I then, finding her much interested, went on to our adventures by the Lago di Garda, and our first supper, at which she had a quarrel with Semiramide, and so on till we arrived at Padua, and my visit with her to her *Babbo*. And here I complimented her upon the gratitude and charity she had shown him.

"Gratitude and charity!" she exclaimed. "Gratitude and charity! *Santissima Virgine!* in what was he indebted to me? I owed him and his wife a debt of gratitude which could

never be paid. They took me, a wretched foundling, without a friend in the world, into their home and brought me up as their own child. No, I returned them only a soldo for every ducato they had bestowed on me. Charity, indeed! How could I bestow charity on those who had been so kind to me that I could never repay the debt I owed them."

Finding the poor creature was getting excited I admitted I was wrong in making the remark. At the same time, I said, I might certainly compliment her on the charity she had shown to poor Elena.

"Charity that I showed to Elena!" she replied. "Why the poor child, by the affection she bestowed on me, returned me a hundredfold for everything I did for her. Nay more," she continued, again getting greatly excited, "I should have starved here, a poor outcast beggar in a foreign land, had it not been for the money earned by that poor girl to maintain me and herself—but understand *me* first, and herself afterwards, for she would eat nothing until she was certain I was provided with everything I required. No, no, I showed her no charity, for as I said before, she has repaid me a hundredfold for all I did for

her"—and here she burst into so strong a flood of tears that I had no little trouble in pacifying her.

At length, however, I somewhat succeeded, and I then asked her if she remembered our promenade in Padua one Sunday afternoon, when all the gay folks were assembled in the Corso.

Here the natural female vanity of the poor creature started out into strong relief. She evidently remembered the splendid appearance she made on the occasion, leaning on my arm, and dressed out as she was in tawdry imitation of a French costume, attracting the attention of the bystanders. I then went with her through the first representation of "Semiramide," and the desperate quarrel she afterwards had with the *prima donna* respecting the bouquet I had thrown to her, and the struggle which occurred between them which should obtain possession of it. These and many other similar subjects I brought under her notice, in which she seemed greatly interested, and which tended to keep up her spirits; while an amiable Catholic priest visited her every day and endeavoured to console her and prepare her for the death which would soon befall her. Things went on in this

manner till at last poor Grandolfi expired. I was the only mourner at her funeral, which took place in the same churchyard and in the same grave in which her adopted daughter had been buried.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I INHERIT A MODERATE FORTUNE.

HAVING described the manner I acquired my cynical habit of thought, and which has remained not only without abatement, but has positively increased in me since, I will not detain the reader with any further description of my career during the following eight years beyond mentioning a few facts necessary for the continuance of my narrative. During the whole of this time my uncle remained in the asylum, I attending assiduously the while to the duties of his office, besides having occasionally commissions for other papers, as well as the monthly and quarterly reviews. It must not, however, be understood that my uncle resided in the asylum after the fashion of an ordinary patient. In this establishment the inmates were divided into two classes —one, those who might justly be termed lunatics

in the ordinary acceptation of the term; the others, monomaniacs who, with the exception of the particular craze under which they laboured, might be considered as perfectly sane on any other subject. To these again may be added patients who, like my uncle, had injured the strength of their brains, first by overwork, and who, when becoming sensible of the depreciation of the mental faculties, endeavoured to stimulate them by the use of alcohol, at the same time never, however, reaching the condition of habitual drunkards. The latter class of patients, it should be understood, were under hardly any more personal restraint than had they been the inmates of a first-class hotel; that is to say, after they had resided in the asylum for a few weeks. The rule there adopted was a very simple one, and is worth mentioning as tending to prove how frequently with men of integrity a promise given to abstain from any particular offence acts as an impenetrable barrier to its perpetration. After this class of patients had been, for the time mentioned, debarred from the use of alcohol, they were allowed, in common with other monomaniacs, to quit the asylum without attendants, on their promising not to taste wine or spirits of

any description during their absence; and it was almost impossible, with gentlemen, to find a single instance in which the promise was broken or evaded. At length, in my uncle's case, the desire for alcoholic stimulants completely subsided; so much so as to have no further temptation for him, and he remained a voluntary inmate in the asylum; not that there was the slightest occasion for it, but that he dreaded if he returned to ordinary society that he might again fall into the habit. In all other respects his mental faculties were in as healthy a condition as they had ever been; so much so that I corresponded with him regularly on the business of the paper, of which he was still the real editor and also part proprietor; and his letters to me and answers to my queries were as perfectly shrewd and as much to the point as they possibly could be.

My uncle Pills continued his practice in Westminster in the same quiet methodical manner, working indefatigably among the poor, less from any absolute necessity than love of his profession; for, small as his income might be, he was most economical in his manner of living. Beyond that, he had been able to accumulate, as I was well aware, some £3000 or £4000, which

he had placed in the Bank of England, and of which he regularly received the dividends and as regularly reinvested them, though for what reason it would be impossible to say, if not from mere habitual economy, as he had not a relative or friend in the world to whom he could bequeath it; for, as the reader is aware, though I was in the habit of speaking of him as my uncle, the relationship was more conventional than real. I visited him frequently, and he was always the same good, kind-hearted fellow I had considered him on the occasion of our first interview.

My friend, Dr. Watson, continued a few years longer to act as resident medical officer of the hospital, and then quitted it to enter into private practice in some town in the country. We occasionally corresponded, though gradually this ceased, till at last I lost sight of him altogether, though still feeling for him a most sincere respect.

Although I resigned my duties as operatic critic to another gentleman, who performed his duty to my perfect satisfaction, I still entertained my old love of the theatre, although by degrees I dropped the whole of my theatrical acquaint-

ances. The last I lost sight of was my old friend Lefevre, who one morning called on me. I perfectly well remember the conversation which occurred at our last interview. I had not seen him for some two or three years, he having left England, as I understood, to take some appointment on the Continent. One day, however, when residing for a few weeks at Brighton, the servant informed me that a foreign gentleman was waiting below who wished to see me. She had asked him his name, but she couldn't very clearly understand it. Somewhat annoyed at the moment, as I was then occupied on a letter of importance—I forget what—I requested the servant to ask him for his card or to explain his business. A few moments afterwards she returned, giving me a name which was utterly unintelligible, and said that the gentleman had no card. I then requested her to show him up, and almost immediately afterwards my friend Lefevre followed her into the room. I was so much pleased to see him that I hardly at first remarked the ridiculous appearance he presented. He was dressed in a sort of travelling cap, with a broad gold band, and an open greatcoat, with fur collar and cuffs—a make-up which he had

evidently taken from his ideas of a travelling nobleman in an opera ballet. After a little conversation he informed me that he had returned to England for a month's visit, and the first place, when in London, he had called at was the office of my paper, and they then gave him my address.

We now conversed amicably together for some little time, and I then inquired the cause of his visit to England. He told me (and here he put on the manners of the ballet nobleman) that, having taken into consideration the present amount of his wordly possessions, he thought himself fully justified in retiring from the world, and thereby making room for some one of the numerous aspirants for terpsicorean fame who were ready to supply his place, and whose life hitherto had not been so fortunate as his own. He further said that he had purchased a handsome house and grounds at Fontainebleau, and that the cause of his visit to England was for the purpose of selling out some money that he had invested in the English funds which he required for the completion of his purchase. I congratulated him most sincerely on the prosperous state of his affairs as well as the good

sense he had exhibited in quitting the profession, much as he might be attached to it, in which he had attained such honourable distinction. After conversing with me for a short time longer, and the packet for Dieppe being about to start, he gave me his address in Fontainebleau, and I promised him that when I next visited France I would certainly do myself the pleasure of spending a day with him. In every other respect my love for the opera was as strong as ever, and I never missed the first representation of a new play or the *début* of a new singer or dancer. I have often endeavoured to trace from what source this inflexible fidelity to the theatre was so strong within me, and on every occasion concluded that my undying affection for certain incidents connected with it was the sole cause. I still retained the faculty of summoning my beloved Clelia before me, the lily in her hand, as vividly as she appeared to me a few weeks after her death when I was residing with my friend in the Pian D'Erba; and that faculty remains with me to the present day, and I devoutly hope that it will never leave me.

Things went on smoothly with me till one day a letter arrived from the physician of the

asylum, informing me of the death of my uncle, the editor, and also that he had despatched a letter to his brother. Without any affectation, the news caused me great sorrow; for my uncle had been the best friend I ever had in my life. At one time, but for his assistance, there appeared no career or prospect open to me save those of a private soldier, beggary, or starvation; and by his means I had now an honourable and tolerably lucrative profession to depend upon. The thought then came before me, if my sorrow at his loss was so great, how terrible must be that of his brother! I tried to summon up courage enough to leave the house for the purpose of calling on Pills and offering him what little consolation might be in my power; but the thought then came before me how useless would be my endeavours, and how painful the affliction of the poor fellow would be to my own feelings.

Over and over again did I endeavour to arrive at some resolution upon the point, but without success; when, to my intense astonishment, the door of the office opened, and Pills himself entered the room. Although there was evidently an appearance of great grief on his

countenance, it hardly assumed the intensity I had pictured to myself. There appeared also with it another feeling—that of alarm and bewilderment. I made no remark, however, and for some moments silence was maintained by us both. Pills was the first to break it.

"I see by the expression of your countenance," he said, "that you have received the intelligence of my poor brother's death. Was there any mention in the letter you received of the cause?"

"None whatever," I replied; "it was merely a notification of his death without any remark upon it," and I then placed the letter before him.

For some moments Pills remained silent, although there was evidently an expression on his countenance that he wished to make some remark. At length, evidently by a sudden effort, he said—

"My letter differs from yours inasmuch as there appears to be a doubt as to the manner of his death. In fact, I may say my letter is worded in such a mysterious manner as almost to convey the idea that my brother died by his own hand. However, as the doctor particularly requested that I should see him as early as

possible, I propose leaving by a late train this evening, and I should like you to accompany me, if you are able to do so."

As the intelligence of my uncle's death arrived at the beginning of the week, and I had two or three days to spare before getting up the next impression of my paper, I readily acceded to Pills' proposition, and he then quitted me, promising to meet me at the station. On our road down Pills asked me if my uncle had lately taken any interest in the management of the paper. I informed him that for some months past his correspondence with me had been exceedingly capricious. Occasionally he would write every week with perfect regularity; then again, several weeks would pass over without my receiving a letter from him, or his answering any that I had addressed to him. I also mentioned that now my attention had been drawn to the subject that some of his letters had lately been written in such a manner as to convey the idea that his mind was failing him. The perspicuity which had generally marked his writings appeared to be fading away, and they were occasionally so confused that I had often considerable difficulty in understanding their mean-

ing. This, of course, I attributed to ill health, and no other cause.

It may easily be supposed that very little conversation took place between us during our journey. When we arrived at the asylum we were ushered into the waiting room, and in a short time afterwards Dr. X—— entered the room. He carried in his hand a paper, respecting which he at first made no remark, confining himself to strongly expressing regret at the death of my uncle.

"I did not like," he continued, addressing Pills, "to express to you, too abruptly, in writing the real state of the case; but now I may as well mention all. Your brother died by his own hand, and a coroner's inquest is to be held on him to-morrow. Of course nothing is clearer than it was the act of a maniac. He had been for some time past evidently disturbed in mind on some subject, but what I could never obtain from him. I questioned him minutely about it, but without success."

"How did the death occur?" inquired Pills.

"The day before yesterday," replied the doctor, "he did not make his appearance at the breakfast table, which somewhat surprised me, in-

asmuch as he was generally exceedingly punctual. Well, the meal passed over without any notice being taken of his absence, and I then quitted the table to make my round of the patients in the other part of the asylum. On my return, one of the attendants informed me that your brother was still in his room, and asked whether he should open the door, as of course there were no bolts on the inside, as is common in most asylums. I ordered the attendant immediately to go to his door, and in case he did not answer when he tapped at it, to open it and walk in. He did so, and to his intense horror found your uncle in his dressing-gown, seated in an easy-chair with his throat cut in a most frightful manner. What caused him to commit the act it is impossible to say. The day before he had appeared in excellent spirits, although for some time past he has been excessively restless at night, and in the morning he appeared exceedingly haggard, and, when I questioned him upon the subject, he told me that he had been for some time past subject to sleeplessness, for which I gave him some ordinary medicine which appeared to do him good."

Pills now inquired whether there had been a

change in his brother's behaviour for any length of time past. Dr. X—— admitted that there had been. About six months before my uncle had received an invitation from a gentleman, whose son had been an inmate of this asylum, to spend a fortnight with him, and promising abundant shooting during the time. Your uncle accepted the invitation, and I had such perfect confidence in the promise he had given me as to abstaining from alcoholic drinks, that I did not suggest even sending an assistant with him. Your uncle returned about the time agreed on, and has remained ever since, never having slept out of the asylum for a single night; although he has more than once received invitations from persons residing in the neighbourhood. Since that time, as I told you, I have noticed occasionally some difference in his behaviour; but only that which could easily be accounted for by the sleepless nights of which he complained. Well, I should further state, we have placed the poor fellow's body in a coffin, and the inquest will be held to-morrow. All his drawers have been searched, and the papers they contained have been collected together, and are at your disposal whenever you please to take charge of them.

Among his numerous papers is the one I have selected, and that, sir," he said to me, "is directed to you. Possibly, it may be something connected with his paper, in the success of which I am perfectly aware he took great interest." So saying, he placed the envelope containing it in my hands.

I now put the somewhat bulky envelope into my pocket, merely remarking that, in all probability, it contained nothing that would be of any interest to anyone outside the office; and we then performed the melancholy duty of visiting the body, which, as the doctor had before told us, was placed in a coffin ready for the inquest next day. Nothing whatever took place in the evening; but after I had retired to my room I opened the envelope, which I found contained some sheets of foolscap paper, closely written over, of which the following is a short abstract. It was somewhat in the form of a letter.

"I am aware, my dear nephew," he said, "that from what I have noticed of your habits of life, there would be no occasion to address you on the subject, which I am convinced will be the indirect cause of my death. At the same

time, as my example may be a terrible and effective lesson to others, and as you may, through the medium of the press, or in some other way, make use of it after my death, for the benefit of those whose habits of sobriety are not equal to your own, I address this letter to you, allowing you to make what use of it you please. I am perfectly well aware, although your good taste and sound sense induced you to conceal it from me, that you were cognizant of, and pained at, the unfortunate habit of intemperance I had acquired, and by which I have, on more than one occasion, degraded myself in your presence. It was with the intention of curing myself of this detestable habit (for I cordially hated it even at the time that I practised it), that I consented to seclude myself in this asylum. And here it is only justice to my friend the doctor to state, that during the years that I have been his guest I have felt an amount of security and comfort, as well as peace of mind, which were utterly unknown to me when I took the principal part in the working editorship of the paper. When I entered these walls I resolutely determined that not a drop of alcohol for the future should ever pass

my lips, and for seven years no man ever kept more resolutely to a determination than I did. Nor was this from want of means to indulge in it had I pleased. I was merely in the character of a paying guest to the doctor. I had full licence and liberty to go where I pleased, and ample funds to secure me every indulgence I might wish for. Nor did any change take place in my habit of life till some months since, when unfortunately I accepted an invitation to spend a fortnight in the house of General ——, who resides on his estate about fourteen miles from here, and with him, in bygone days, I used to be on a footing of considerable intimacy.

"Well, I accepted the invitation, and was received by the General in a most friendly manner. There were several other guests in the house, most of them military men. After dinner the first day the General told them that I had acquired the somewhat peculiar habit of abstinence from all alcoholic drinks, and they would excuse me if I drank the toasts which were proposed in water. This they politely agreed to, and the evening passed off with great good humour, none of them openly noticing my peculiarity, although it occasionally

struck me that I could detect a sly sort of quizzical humour passing between them on my abstinence. The following day we spent in shooting, and we contrived to bag a very large quantity of game. Not having lately been accustomed to much fatigue, I must confess that in the evening I felt somewhat exhausted by my day's exertions. This was noticed by several of the party at dinner, among whom was an old army surgeon, who advised me that if I did not take it from a convivial feeling, at any rate, from a medical point of view, I should do well to break through my total abstinence principles, and take a glass or two of wine. Still I resisted; but the other guests backed up the doctor's advice so energetically that at last I was foolish enough to give way, and I joined them in one or two toasts which were proposed, still restraining myself within the bounds of the most perfect moderation.

"Well, the next day the same thing occurred, and I went on day after day, each day the quantity of wine I took becoming the greater, though never to the extent of producing absolute intoxication. Still I admit I got considerably excited, and had more than one violent quarrel;

for my temperament, like that of a good many others under the influence of alcohol, became exceedingly irritable, and I, in consequence, quarrelsome and pugnacious. On the last day of my stay at the General's a circumstance occurred which was, in fact, the cause of my quitting his house. I had a violent and unjustifiable quarrel with an officer present who, however, noticing the condition I was in, took my remarks with perfect good breeding, and refused to answer any provocation I offered him. This reticence on his part enraged me the more, till at last my rage became ungovernable, and I not only insulted him grossly, but struck him a blow. This, however, he had sufficient restraint over himself not to return, and the others separated us.

"Maddened as I was, I could easily perceive the strong appearance of disgust upon the faces of the whole of the guests. The officer whom I had so grossly insulted had left the room with one of his friends, and I, in a fit of dudgeon at finding the others would not converse with me, at length sought my room. The next morning, however, all my anger had vanished, and little remained on my memory of the previous evening's transactions, but the gross, ungentlemanly,

and unjustifiable conduct I had been guilty of. On my descending from my room, I begged an interview with the General, and told him that after my ungentlemanly conduct the evening before (and no man could regret an action more sincerely than I did my previous night's behaviour) it would be impossible for me to remain longer in his house. At the same time, before I went I should like personally, and before the others, to apologize to the officer whom I had insulted so grossly, at the same time, holding myself personally answerable should he not consider that apology sufficient. The General complimented me on my decision, and told me, all circumstances being taken into consideration, he would offer no objection to my leaving the house. At the same time, he thought that it would be more agreeable to my feelings, as well as that of the officer I had insulted, if I allowed him to act as my messenger in explaining my regret, as also my perfect willingness to do it before the whole party, provided he considered it would be more satisfactory to his friend's feelings. This, of course, I agreed to, and about an hour afterwards the General told me he had seen his

friend, as well as the other officers, who considered the apology perfectly sufficient, and who expressed their regret that anything had occurred to disturb the harmony of their very pleasant visit.

"Although nothing could be more courteous than this behaviour on the part of the assembled guests, it did not clear my conscience from the fact that I had not only broken the word of honour I had given to the doctor, and my own determination to abstain for ever from the use of alcohol, but that I had committed a most ungentlemanly and degrading act in quarrelling in the ruffianly manner I had done with those who had treated me with so much courtesy—the very amount of courtesy I had received from them increasing in severity the disgrace I felt I had brought upon myself. Notwithstanding the request of the General and his friends that I would think nothing more of the affair, I felt so much abashed that I resolved to leave the house the same day; and, after having made all preparations for my journey, and thanked my host in terms of genuine gratitude for the kindness I had received at his hands, I returned to the asylum.

"I had not the courage to inform the doctor of the events which had taken place during my visit, although I more than suspected he had arrived at the conclusion that things had not passed off as agreeably as might have been wished. However, nothing was said upon the subject, and some months passed over, when one day, after scrutinising me attentively for some time, he enquired whether I felt myself in good health. I told him that I was perfectly well, and asked him the reason of his putting the question to me. He replied that he had noticed on my countenance an expression of fatigue and anxiety for some weeks past, and he feared that I might have been suffering from some constitutional cause; but, however, as I said that there was no reason for the enquiry, he would not trouble me any further on the matter. This he said in so kind a manner that I determined to make him a confidant; for I felt I was obliged to make some explanation to him for the change he had noticed in my appearance. I told him that for some time past I was unable to sleep at nights; and that, in fact, occasionally, from the time I went to bed, till I arose in the morning, I never closed my eyes. After express-

ing his sorrow that I had not informed him of it before, he gave me some medicine he thought would benefit me, and which I promised to take according to his directions. I did so, though with very little good effect.

"The fact really was that it was from no natural or physiological causes that I was kept from sleep, but an intense terror of the dreams which might occur in it. For some time after I quitted the General's, occasionally the wish would come over me again to return to my drinking habits. This, however, I resolutely determined I would not do, and to my death, which I am certain will shortly occur, I will never waver from my determination, the terrible degradation I experienced when at the General's, and which is still fresh on my mind, being stronger than the temptation to break through my resolution.

"The desire to recommence my drinking habits continued to increase; nor did my resolution fail, though I was now the victim of a phantom persecution (for I knew it to be only ideal) which rendered my very life one continued terrible torture, and to which in the end I feel I must succumb. Continually, and especially in the evening, I see the phantom of a man's hand

holding an open razor, generally occurring after the desire of some stimulant has subsided in my mind. These phantoms are psychological phenomena so well known in the case of individuals who have been victims of intemperance, that my reasoning powers would have borne up against it; but another, and more terrible persecution was added to it. Whenever I fell asleep I was tormented by some dream, evidently connected with self-destruction, but the particulars of which I could not remember, which would haunt me the whole of the night. That it must have been terrible I judge from the fact of the natural horror I experienced whenever I laid my head on my pillow. Though possessing but little medical science, I was fully convinced this was a malady a doctor could not cure. True, occasionally a suspicion was hinted to me that if I returned again to my drinking habits the phantom would vanish, and that I might be able to enjoy natural sleep; but my determination continued still stronger, nor will I give way till the impression is insupportable, and I must seek peace in the grave."

I did not mention to my uncle the contents of this letter, although I determined (if nothing

should arise at the coroner's inquest, to produce it) afterwards to show it to him in order to prove that his death had been caused by his own hand while in a state of insanity. However, there was no occasion for my mentioning the subject; for the jury, without hesitation, brought in a verdict to that effect, and nothing more was said at the time on the subject. Two days afterwards my uncle was buried. Both Pills and myself attended the funeral. I must say I sincerely grieved at my loss; but a great portion of my grief was lost in my pity for my uncle, who stood beside me during the ceremony, weeping like a child, and I had some difficulty in removing him from the grave when the funeral ceremony was over. As we came up to town I think he wept nearly the greater part of the way, but became somewhat more composed as we neared London, and when I bade him good night, he begged me to visit him frequently, as I was now the only relative, or friend, he had in the world.

My uncle, the editor, left a will which had been made before he took up his residence in the asylum; in it he bequeathed, without exception, all he possessed to his brother. To our great

surprise he was far more wealthy than either of us had imagined. With his interest in the paper, as well as the money he had set aside, it would not be less than £13,000, and yet we had not believed him to be worth half the money.

After my uncle's affairs were concluded a change took place in my domestic arrangements. Uncle Pills resolved to relinquish practice, and about six months after he came into possession of his brother's legacy, he took a moderate sized house in Brompton, and having handsomely furnished it he invited me to live with him. At first I was somewhat afraid we might not go on amicably together, he being very precise and regular in all his habits, while I, on the contrary, was somewhat careless and indifferent. Fortunately, however, all alarm or doubt on the subject soon vanished; for on my arrival with my very modest luggage at the house, Pills said smilingly to me,

"Now, my dear boy, let us understand each other. I have very great faith in the proverb: "Short reckonings make long friends." Let us draw up a plan of our mode of life, and each determine to keep it. I now make over the drawing-room floor to you absolutely, the rest of

the house I keep for myself. Breakfast at what time you like in your own rooms, and before you leave the house let my housekeeper know whether you will dine with me. My dinner-hour is seven o'clock. On Sundays I expect you will both breakfast and dine with me. Now, does that scheme suit you? If so, keep to it, and I will do the same."

I need hardly say that I most willingly accepted these conditions, and we continued to reside most amicably together, without the slightest angry or discontented feeling ever arising between us.

I will not detain you, gentle reader, with any of my adventures during the next six years, nothing having occurred during the time particularly worthy of remark. My life was that of an ordinary press-writer, seeing many changes—so many, in fact, that at last I took little more than an ephemeral notice of them, and all remembrance of them then faded away altogether, for even variety itself may become monotonous by frequent repetition.

At length appearances presented themselves in my uncle's health which induced me to think it was gradually giving way. In the

end, it turned out that I was a true prophet, and that to my own sorrow; for I had a great respect for the old man, who, notwithstanding his peculiarities, was as good and kind a fellow as ever lived. He was also aware that his health was fast breaking up, and he informed me, in case of his death, where I should find his will. And then his appetite fell off, and he became so weak he could no longer sit at table on Sundays when I dined with him, and so on, till he was obliged to keep his bed, and then after a short time his life gradually faded away. I knew that his friend, the physician of the asylum, was one of his executors, and that I was the other; so I wrote to Shirley Hall to give him notice of my uncle's death, and to request him, if possible, to be present at the funeral, which he promised to do. After the ceremony was over the will was opened, and to my surprise I found that, with the exception of the sum of £200 which he bequeathed to Dr. Jones, my brother executor, I was heir to the whole of his property, which, when the will was proved, turned out to be little less than £17,000.

CHAPTER XXV.

A PILGRIMAGE.

I MUST confess that the large sum of money bequeathed to me by my uncle, instead of stimulating me to rise in the world, rather contributed to make me idle. In fact, it would hardly be too much to say that, so far from making me feel happier, it had, if any effect at all, rather a depressing influence than otherwise. It had cost me the lives of two relatives; and without any affectation, so great was the esteem I held them in that I should willingly have relinquished the whole if I could have restored them to life. I had, in fact, no subject for consolation. The stimulus created by the knowledge that work was necessary for my existence, had faded, and this tended to make me idle, if not lazy. Even my love for the theatre had dwindled away till scarcely any of it remained,

and I, who formerly had been so interested in al matters connected with the stage, not solely with respect to music, but to all theatrical per formances, and who never omitted the first repre sentation, no matter at what theatre, now hardly ever felt inclined to enter the doors of one, and when I did found everything vapid and unin teresting. I wrote much less than I had hitherto been accustomed to do, and even the little I did write gradually dwindled away till at length I should have determined to abandon literature altogether, had it not been for a feeling of gratitude I experienced at the benefits I had received from it. Finding, however, the time without occupation hang heavily on my hands, after a lapse of two years, during which I occa sionally contributed to the press, I resolved to spend some time abroad, determining if the desire to write should again come over me, that I would become "occasional correspondent" to some newspaper on any subject likely to interest the public, which came under my notice.

Having arrived at the determination to quit England and pass some time abroad, it now only remained for me to decide what countries I would first visit. To come to a decision on the point,

however, occasioned me some little difficulty. At length I definitely settled on my route, resolving that it should take the form of a pilgrimage to the various countries and localities I had visited some thirty-five years before, when in the spring-time of youth and energy. Things as well as my habits of thought had much changed with me since that time, and also my position and prospects. I then imagined myself to be in possession of an income, not only sufficient to support me in comfort, but to afford me many of the luxuries of life as well, all of which afterwards proved to be false. I now was the possessor of a moderate fortune, not only sufficient to last me during my own life, but which would enable me to bequeath a considerable sum to any one in whom I might feel an interest, as well as to contribute largely to any benevolent institution I might decide on.

As the weight of years was now beginning to press somewhat heavily upon me, and the temptations for rapid change of scene were not as great as they were on my first journey abroad, I resolved to take ample time so as to render my journey the less fatiguing. My first halting-place was Boulogne-sur-Mer, where I remained

for a few weeks, it then being the height of the season. During my stay there, with one or two exceptions, I met with little worthy of notice; and even this, perhaps, would be without interest to the reader unless he should be as old as I am, and had been formerly as much interested in the opera and other theatrical affairs as myself. I had occasionally noticed on fine evenings, when sitting on the pier, a tall, broad-shouldered, very heavy old man, who stooped considerably. He was not only evidently very gouty, but he was also nearly blind as well, and obliged to wear a large green shade before his eyes. He was always led by a ladylike young woman, between twenty-five and thirty years of age, whom I afterwards found to be his granddaughter. The marked attention she paid the poor old man pleased me exceedingly, and induced me to inquire into their history, when, to my surprise, I discovered him to be no other than the once celebrated D'Egville, formerly one of the most graceful male dancers who had ever appeared at either the Paris or London opera-houses. I determined to make his acquaintance, so that I might obtain from him some theatrical anecdotes of the time when he succeeded to the honorary title of the *Dieu de*

dance, after the decease of the great Vestris. I managed to obtain an introduction to the lady, his granddaughter; but I found I should be disappointed in making his acquaintance. The poor fellow at the time I saw him was between eighty-five and ninety years of age, and his intellects had sunk even beneath those of second childhood.

But if I was disappointed in obtaining any information from D'Egville, through the means of his granddaughter I formed another acquaintance—a widow lady whose husband, a good many years her senior, had formerly been an opera-dancer, who, though of no very great notoriety in his profession, inherited a small pension from the British government for service he had rendered in saving from captivity, if not from death, one of our admirals. The lady alluded to, a Madame Boisgerard, told me that, before she married her husband, who was a very fine, handsome fellow, he had, when younger, served in the French army, which he afterwards quitted for the stage. Having been accused of some trifling offence, he was ordered to attend before the chief of the police to explain his conduct. While in the ante-chamber wait-

ing his turn for admission, the clerk then on duty having been called out of the room, Boisgerard noticed, lying on his desk, some blank forms for the transmission of prisoners from one prison to another, as well as one already signed. Taking up a pen, he immediately copied the signature on a blank form, and placed it in his hat, and was shortly afterwards introduced to the inspector of the police. His business over with that official, Boisgerard left the place, and then proceeded to put into execution one of the most cool and daring pieces of strategy that could possibly have been invented. It appears that he had in some way obtained a sort of acquaintanceship with Sir Sidney Smith, then incarcerated in Paris, and whom he held in high esteem. He now determined, if possible, to release him, and set him at liberty. With this view he conspired with two of his fellow dancers, both of whom were strongly opposed to the government of the time, to aid him in the matter. This they agreed to do, and Boisgerard, with the assistance of a friend, got three gendarmes' uniforms made, one for a sergeant, the others for privates. All being ready now for carrying out their plot, Boisgerard produced the forged order he

had taken from the inspector of the police's office, ordering the governor of the prison in Paris to deliver to Sergeant X. of the gendarmes the person of Sir Sidney Smith, an English prisoner, for conveyance to one of the eastern fortresses, and calling also on all the authorities on his road thither to afford him whatever aid, protection and assistance he might require.

Armed with this document, and accompanied by his two brother dancers, Sir Sidney Smith was delivered into his custody. Instead of attempting any concealment, Boisgerard had sufficient nerve to travel openly, though with great rapidity, with his prisoner till he had arrived on the frontiers of Germany, where he released him. Sir Sidney Smith, it need hardly be said, was exceedingly grateful to him for his courage, and the great service he rendered him. Boisgerard was employed at the Haymarket Opera-house as a ballet-dancer for many years, and he married an English young lady, the widow to whom I was introduced. Afterwards, he quitted the stage and returned to France, where he died, and I subsequently heard that a year or two after my introduction

to his widow at Boulogne she also passed away, and was buried in the Boulogne cemetery.

From Boulogne I went to Paris, where I remained some months. During my stay there, I resolved to redeem my promise to my old friend Lefevre to pay him a visit should I ever pass through France. He, as I before stated, when he quitted the theatrical profession in England, had purchased a residence at Fontainebleau. I began to fear, as so many of my old friends were now no more, that he also might no longer be in existence, and I almost dreaded my visit. After putting it off from day to day for some weeks, I at last took courage, and proceeded to Fontainebleau. When I quitted the train, I inquired of the station-master if he knew a M. Lefevre, and, if so, to direct me to his house, and then, on finding it to be no further distance than I could walk without difficulty, I declined the services of any of the many fly-drivers there assembled, and started off on foot. After I had proceeded on my way for about half an hour, I perceived two houses, both of very respectable appearance, situated some little distance from a bifurcation of the road. Not wishing to reach the wrong one, I looked around

me to find, if possible, some one who could point out to me the one of which I was in search. After waiting for a short time, I at length saw two individuals slowly approaching me. As I came nearer, I perceived one seemed aged and decrepit, and leaning upon the arm of the other, who was much younger, and who appeared to be a servant. I now advanced to meet them, and inquired if they could tell me which of the two houses I saw was that of M. Lefevre.

"The one you see before you, sir," the man replied, "is the house," and then, indicating the old paralysed man by his side, "This is M. Lefevre."

I stared aghast at the poor old man, who evidently recognised me, and made a feeble but unsuccessful attempt to put out his hand to take the one I offered him. It was useless, however; his hand, which he had barely the power to move, before I could grasp it, again fell helpless by his side. He attempted to speak, but was unable, though his eyes, filling with tears, spoke eloquently in his stead. I endeavoured to console him, and partly succeeded, and we then turned round and proceeded slowly towards his house.

On our arrival, a servant conducted us to a well and even elegantly furnished room, in which I found a very stout, well-dressed, good-looking, and rather ladylike woman, apparently between thirty-five and forty years of age, and a man some few years older. He was evidently an ex-dancer. I explained to the latter that I formerly had had the pleasure of being acquainted with M. Lefevre, and had, moreover, been under great obligations to him; so many, indeed, that it would have been an act of great ingratitude on my part had I passed through France without calling on him. Poor Lefevre evidently understood me; for he slowly shook his head, and made some remark which, however, was unintelligible to me. The stout lady now acted as interpreter, and told me that Lefevre denied my being under any obligations to him. On the contrary, he had always had so much pleasure in my acquaintance that it more than compensated him for any little services he might have rendered to me. The lady then proceeded to give me a short sketch of the manner in which Lefevre had lived during his residence in Fontainebleau. He had, attached to his house, a few acres of ground, which he cultivated partly

as garden and partly as meadow, in which he took great interest; his poultry, cow, and vegetables all being models in their way, while the pleasure garden and flowers were not surpassed in any house in the whole district of the forest. I could hardly help smiling, painful as it was, to see the poor fellow, and to mark the pleasure expressed on his countenance when these facts were being described; for the idea came before me of the ballet lord of a village, or some other Terpsichorean dignitary, occupying himself in the manner he patronised the labours of his supposed vassals on the stage. The lady then told me how many years of his life her friend Lefevre had passed in this peaceful manner, during which time he had acquired the good feeling of the whole of the inhabitants surrounding him. Nor was he without his indoor recreations. He had been seized with a craze not uncommon in the present day—that of collecting objects of vertu and nick-knacks. It further seemed that this passion had been indulged in for many years before, although he had concealed it from the world, he in his travels picking up whatever objects he thought worthy of preservation, and placing them in the deposi-

tory where they would remain in safety till his artistic career had ended. The result was that he had succeeded in making a collection equal to that of any private individual, perhaps, in Europe, and certainly unsurpassed by any.

Here the lady's narrative was interrupted for some short time by Lefevre becoming intensely excited. He made some painful pantomimic gestures explanatory of a wish which that moment occupied his mind, as well as some distorted spasmodic motions of his countenance totally incomprehensible to me, but which were perfectly understood by our lady companion. In explanation, she told me that M. Lefevre wished to show me his collection of curiosities. Although I felt but little interest in the subject, I, of course, expressed the pleasure I should feel in his so doing. He now, with the assistance of the lady and gentleman (the latter had hitherto remained silent), rose from the chair, and was conducted by them through the three different sitting-rooms which his house contained; while she, evidently well practised in her lesson, explained to me the different objects which were there placed on the shelves and their merits and beauties which rendered them so valuable,

Lefevre's eye watching her the whole of the time attentively, and a smile of approbation appearing on his countenance when she showed any particular enthusiasm in her descriptions.

The tour of inspection of Lefevre's curiosities being over, we returned to the sitting-room, and the lady then continued her narrative respecting the origin of the malady from which her poor friend was suffering. It appears that one day, seated at table, his handkerchief fell on the ground, and, stooping down to raise it, he found that he had not the power in his fingers to do so. His lady friend, possibly thinking that his fingers were benumbed, rubbed them after taking up the handkerchief, and in a little time circulation seemed to be restored, although he did not continue his breakfast. During the day-time nothing particular occurred; but in the evening, when attempting to rise from his chair to proceed to his bedroom, he was seized with a paralytic attack which had continued, though somewhat modified, up to the present time. She had done, she said, everything she could to relieve him, and she hoped to benefit him still more, not simply from a feeling of sympathy with his complaint and respect for his character,

but in gratitude for the favours she had formerly received from him, and which would dwell impressed upon her memory as long as she lived. I then noticed that the eyes of Lefevre, who had been watching her as she spoke, again began to fill with tears, and that he shook his head when she expressed her gratitude to him for the various kindnesses he had bestowed on her as if repudiating the idea that he was worthy of a compliment of the kind.

While the lady was speaking, the thought more than once occurred to me that her features were not unknown to me, and I endeavoured, though in vain, to bring to mind where I had seen her. And then it struck me that I did not seem a total stranger to her, as she conversed with less subjection than is customary among French ladies when speaking to those with whom they are not acquainted. We continued to converse in this manner for some little time, Lefevre asking me questions with respect to the present state of the Italian Opera-house in London, she translating his gestures to me at the time, and he appeared much to regret the information I gave him that the love for the ballet in general was fast fading among the frequenters of the

opera-house, and that, if this indifference continued to increase, it would in the end, as is now the case, become extinct altogether. He expressed sorrow at my words, and prophesied the speedy ruin of the different managers if they allowed the feeling to continue, as fully one-half of the patrons of that theatre, and those the most liberal, were patrons of the ballet.

Presently Lefevre made some remark about the ballet which his lady friend corrected him in, and she then appealed to me whether she did not state the truth, calling to my remembrance a circumstance which had occurred during the second year of my employment as operatic critic on my uncle's paper. I looked at her with so much astonishment that she laughingly said,

"You appear quite to have forgotten me. But it is perfectly excusable, as I am so much changed in appearance and totally different from what I was at the time M. Lefevre is speaking of."

I hesitated for a moment, trying to recall her to my mind, but without success, when she continued,

"It is not much to be wondered at if you do not remember me, for the position I occupied in the ballet was by no means an exalted one. I

was, in fact, far below any of the second-rate stars; yet I remember you perfectly well as one of the gentlemen connected with the press who used occasionally to visit behind the scenes. Nor do I suppose you would recollect my name, which was, however, Frosine Mallet; for I am now married, and that gentleman," alluding to the ex-dancer, who had just left the room, "is my husband."

For some moments I remained silent from astonishment; but presently her features recalled her fully to my remembrance, as well as the episode of her love for poor Appiani who unfortunately died. On glancing at her husband, I felt some wonder she should have chosen so common-looking a man after the graceful and gentlemanly young fellow to whom she had formerly been engaged. Of course, I told her I now remembered her perfectly well, and by degrees drew from her some few sketches of her career since the time of Appiani's death. Her father, she explained, from habits of intemperance had at length become a hopeless invalid; but still she had continued to him a faithful if not attached daughter. When they returned to Paris, the expenses which they had incurred in consequence

of his illness and a want of employment on her part sank them into absolute poverty, when her present husband, whom she had formerly known at some minor theatre in France, kindly assisted them; and from her manner I could easily guess that it was fully as much from gratitude as affection that, after her father's death, she married him. Her husband had then taken a theatre at which she danced, and considerable success had attended their different speculations, till at length they had acquired sufficient money to give up the stage altogether, and had purchased a small house near the one in which Lefevre was residing. Of course, an acquaintanceship rapidly sprung up between them, which ripened into an intimacy. This was still further increased on Lefevre's attack of paralysis, possibly instigated by a humane feeling as well as gratitude for the kindness he had formerly shown her; and she acted partly as his nurse and wholly as his housekeeper, having full powers over the control of his establishment. I remained with them till the last train was about to start for Paris, our conversation dwelling principally on bygone days, and I then left them with some regret.

My visit to Lefevre, on the whole, had a singular effect upon my mind. The interest which had formerly existed in it to all matters connected with the theatre had, in great part, returned to me, and, as days passed on, that interest increased. The more I reflected on the conversation which had taken place with Lefevre the more vividly did different objects and episodes connected with my first trip into Italy appear before me, so that by the end of the following week I had determined to leave Paris and proceed directly southwards, taking in my route all the different points of interest which I had noticed during my former journey.

When I left Paris, I proceeded directly to Lyons, and, by way of rendering the former scenes fresh on my memory, I took up my abode there in the same hotel in which I had resided on my first journey, and in which I had made the acquaintance of Lefevre. But how much all was changed! Lyons itself appeared no longer the same place, although, by degrees, I could conjure up different spots I had visited on my former journey. But if Lyons possessed but few attractions to me, compared to what it did formerly, the road from Lyons to Turin was

now deprived of all the romance which had attended it on my first trip. The railway which had been constructed hurried us so rapidly along that the different points which before had interested me, even when it passed over the same route that I had formerly taken, possessed no longer any charms for me. I conjured up to my mind the bridge over the river which Lefevre had pointed out to me as so admirably adapted for a theatrical scene, if a man in mediæval armour, with a halberd in his hand, had been placed on it, and the idea which then arose in my mind that he must be a man of exquisite taste to have arrived at such a conclusion, and I wondered what his profession might be. And now the bridge no longer existed, or, if so, we must have hurried so rapidly past it as to have escaped my notice; and all the other different little episodes which had occurred in my former journey I can now no longer bring back to my memory. Even the crossing of Mont Cenis had lost all its interest; and the tunnel, advantageous as it indisputably was, had destroyed all romance connected with the difficulties which formerly existed. Even Turin itself offered no longer the attractions I had

formerly found in it when the novelty was so fresh upon my mind.

I felt annoyed at this want of interest, and determined to renew, if I could, my former interest by visiting the opera in the evening, but with very little success. The dim lustre which at my first visit had lighted up the house had been replaced by a gas chandelier, which made the theatre scarcely less brilliant than one in London in the present day, and the sort of mystery which then hung over it was dispelled, and everything seemed commonplace in comparison to what it had been formerly. True, with the performances I was somewhat more interested. I conjured up before me poor Delorge dancing as Zephyr to Steibelt's music in *Psyche*, and could easily understand the pain the poor fellow was suffering when attempting to conceal the sick baby's gourd in his hand as he was dancing, and, with every twirl he made upon the stage, his eyes catching sight of the dying infant in the arms of one of the coryphei. And then I remembered the Frasi, and her appearance afterwards in London, and many other little episodes.

After visiting different spots that I had seen

on my first visit, all of which seemed singularly now without interest, I proceeded onward by rail to Milan, and took up my abode, as before, at Reichmann's Hotel, in order that I might be able to trace with greater facility the different events which had occurred to me in that town. Here, again, I noticed many transformations and alterations in the place, many of which completely destroyed the impression of the old mediæval Italian town which had formerly attracted me so much. The Scala was now closed; but the Canobiana and Carcano were both open, and to both theatres I went. I cannot say the impression the latter had upon me was altogether pleasurable, as it conjured up more than anything else the scene of poor Juliet in Vaccai's Opera, in which I had behaved in so unfeeling and ungentlemanly a manner; and I quitted the theatre under the same feeling of annoyance that a man experiences when a wound he had thought healed is in any way chafed. Nor did my annoyance end here. During the few days I stayed in Milan I had occasion to employ a tailor to make some alteration in my travelling costume, and as he delayed finishing his work by the time appointed, I had to call

upon him several times to impress upon him that I was anxious to quit the city. The fact was the poor fellow, a widower, had been ill; and his mother-in-law, who took charge of his children—a stout, elderly woman, with an amiable expression of countenance—was generally present when I called. However, I should state that she appeared by no means anxious to oblige me when I begged her to induce her son-in-law to obtain further assistance. She even seemed to answer me shortly, and somewhat rudely and distantly. On the occasion of my second visit the thought struck me that her features were not unknown to me. However, I could not recall where I had seen her, and the idea passed off. Afterwards, when her son-in-law had recovered, he finished my little commission, and brought his work to the hotel. During some conversation which passed between us, I told him I was very much afraid his mother-in-law had been very angry with me for the trouble I had given her. With a smile on his face, he I had come to such a conclusion. the short and somewhat uncivil had given me when I had spoken to the man fairly laughed, and then

stated he thought I must have been mistaken as to the cause of his mother-in-law's answers. That she had given them was very likely; but her provocation arose from a totally different cause. Greatly surprised at the man's statement, I asked what could have induced her to behave as she had done, and I then found out that his mother-in-law had formerly been an opera-singer of some little celebrity; and, going further into the question, I discovered that she was no other than my old friend Juliet, to whom I had behaved in so cruel a manner. Although I had, to a certain extent, forgotten her features, she recognised mine the moment she saw me, and that was the cause of the sharp and somewhat uncivil answers she had given me.

From Milan I went to Brescia and Padua; but there also the railroad had changed all. I tried to conjure up the different events which had occurred during my journey with the second-rate opera company; but, however, all interest seemed to have vanished. At Padua I stayed for a day, and even paid a visit to the dwelling of Grandolfi's old Babbo, as she called him, or rather the spot on which it formerly stood; for it was no longer there. My journey from Padua

to Venice was also a disappointment; the railroad viaduct destroyed the magic effect it had produced on my mind on my former visit, when, after leaving Fuscina, the domes and spires of the city appeared to me, in the light of the evening sun, as floating on a sea of crystal, raising my imagination as to the beauties I should behold in it; as the gondola pursued its slow way across the waters, my expectations rising the higher the nearer we came to it. After a few days in Venice I chose the road I had taken before through Florence and Rome to Naples; but all seemed flat, stale, and unprofitable. In Naples I stayed for a few months, and then again turned my steps northward for the purpose of making a pilgrimage to Sienna, in which city, as the reader may remember, I first saw my beloved Clelia. I arrived there in the evening, and, finding the theatre open, went there. Very little had been changed in it. It was as unostentatious a building as when I had last seen it, though it seemed better lighted. As I went in, I remembered the recess in the passage to the pit in which I had seen her seated on the evening of her benefit, which was the occasion of my quarrel with my German antagonist; and what the performance

was, I have no remembrance; my thoughts were too fully occupied with what had occurred in former days to pay the slightest attention to what was being played, and I am now totally ignorant whether it was tragedy, comedy, or opera. The following day I visited the church in which I had seen the picture of the saint holding the lily in her hand with which the form of Clelia always presented itself to me; but it had been removed, possibly for the purpose of restoration. However, I discovered the place in which it had formerly stood, the marks of a picture having been there being still plainly visible. Without waiting to visit the ground on which my duel took place, I now proceeded northwards on my pilgrimage to Pisa and Pavia. Here, indeed, memory conjured up most painful reminiscences. Although the café and the very building itself in which Clelia's death took place had been destroyed, still the spot was sacred to me, but the reminiscences which arose from it were so painful that I quitted the town the following day. Of one effect of my visit to Pavia, I had no cause to be ungrateful, and that was that it tended to stamp more clearly than ever the form of my poor Clelia on my

memory. I then attempted to visit the room in the house occupied by my old friend in the Pian d'Erba in which her vision had first appeared to me; but the house was now occupied by strangers, and was changed so much in appearance as to be hardly recognisable. I remained, however, in the neighbourhood of the Italian lakes till the next winter came on, and then journeyed slowly back to England, where I arrived in good health, but in somewhat low spirits.

During my residence on the continent, I had had no communication from England whatever; nor was it much to be wondered at; for all with whom I had formerly been intimate had passed away, and with those who remained, though among them many very good fellows, there were none with whom I had any particular cause to care about. Nor during the whole of the time did I, in a single instance, carry out my intention of playing the "occasional correspondent" to a newspaper. A certain sort of apathy seemed to hang over me, now that I was comparatively a wealthy man, which had been absent during the time I had been obliged to exert myself to obtain the bare means of existence. Nor did any change for the better occur when I again

arrived in London. At length I began seriously to consider my position, and what would be the results if this apathy continued to increase. I was but little of a psychologist; but, however, I knew enough of science to dread the morbid indifference by which all objects seemed surrounded.

At length a legal question arose which gave me some cause for exertion. Some error had been discovered in a purchase (I forget what at the present time, nor would it interest the reader if I could remember it). It was something connected with a purchase my uncle, the editor, had made, and some deed or transfer was now wanted, inasmuch as the person to whom it had been sold after his death now required it to complete the title. Of what had become of it, I knew nothing; in fact, I had never seen it. Nor did I know where to look for it. However, I considered it my duty to make whatever exertions I could; but being unsuccessful, I placed it in the hands of my solicitor to make the best explanation on the matter that he could. Nor had he better success than I had myself. The result was that the purchaser commenced some action against me, I don't know

what, and there seemed to be every prospect of a chancery suit, which I felt it would be just as well, if possible, to avoid; for, though I was sadly wanting in excitement and amusement, it was hardly that sort of excitement a suit of the kind would afford. However, there was no help for it, and the litigation went on for some time without anything being decided.

At length a thought occurred to me which, it may easily be suppossed might have occurred to me before—that very possibly the transfer might have been left among my uncle's, the editor's, papers at the asylum in which he died, and I now determined to write to Dr. Jones, my brother executor, to ask him whether it was possible an accident of the kind could have occurred. In a few days afterwards the letter was returned to me through the Dead Letter Office. I now addressed another to the physician in charge of the asylum, whoever he might be, requesting him to give me what information he could respecting Dr. Jones, and in a few days afterwards I received a note which not only caused me considerable surprise, but gratification as well, although it did not relate to the paper in question. The letter was from my old friend

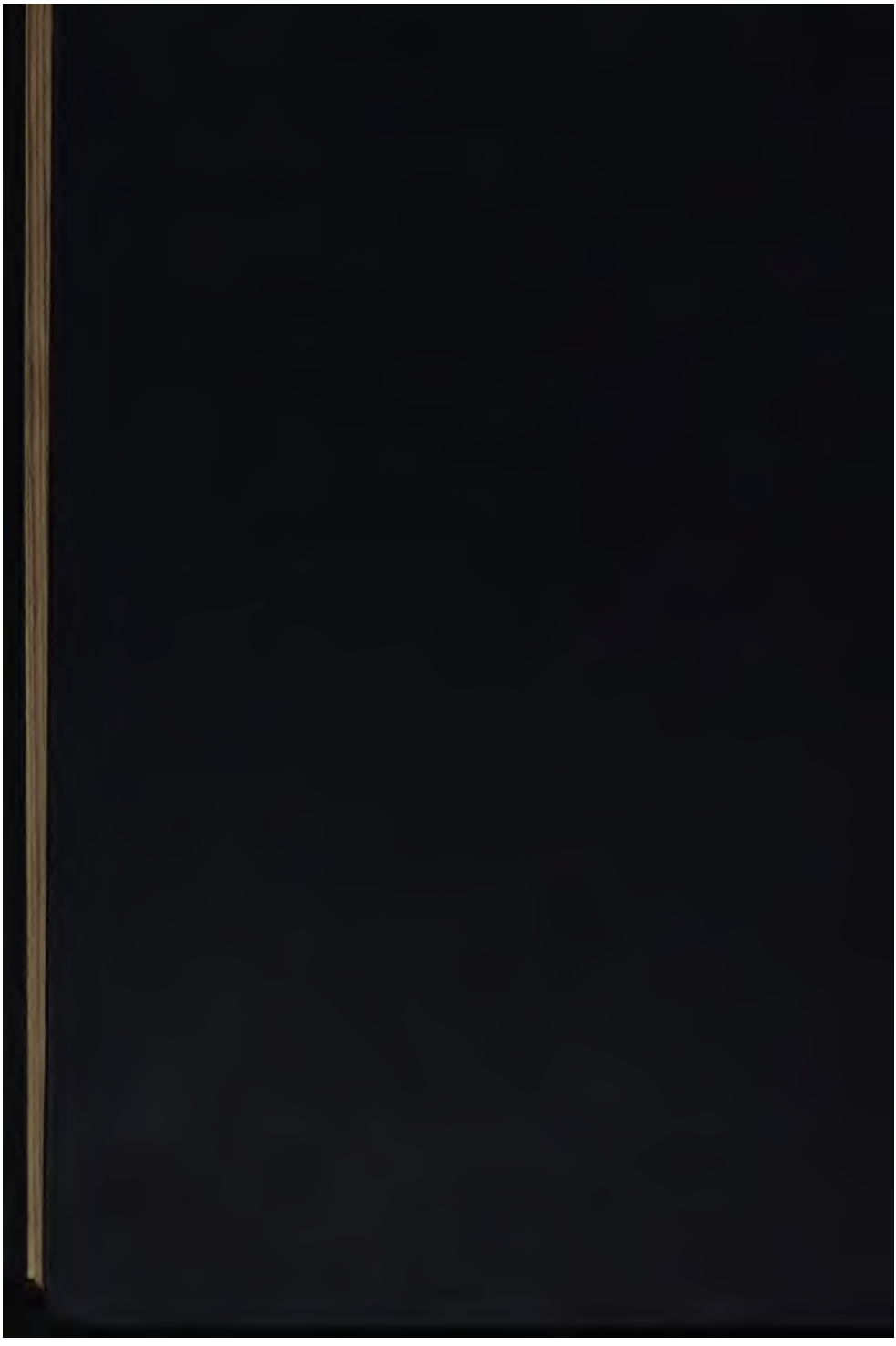
Dr. Watson, formerly resident medical officer of the Westminster Infirmary, the same who gave me so much interesting information respecting the affinity existing between the poor in the Almonry at Westminster and the Italian Opera-house. The letter was a somewhat lengthy one, of which the following is a short abstract. He informed me that, having casually heard of the death of my uncle, the editor, he wrote to the physician of the asylum, asking some particulars of his case, inasmuch as he had always entertained for him a strong friendship. A reply was forthwith sent him, and the result was a considerable intimacy sprang up between him and Dr. Jones, which continued till the latter's death. Being tired of private practice, in which he acknowledged he had succeeded but very indifferently, and although now far advanced in life, he made application for the appointment, and received it, and in which he had been engaged for several years past, and the appointment, he continued, perfectly suited him. He had now no anxiety, and a moderate income secured to him, which, added to the little he had managed to economise, kept him free from all anxiety about the future. Moreover, being

always fond of psychological subjects, the practice in the asylum perfectly suited him, and the longer he continued in it, the more interest he felt in it. He further said that he would immediately search for the papers I required; though, from the mass of documents which had accumulated in the asylum, it would render the task a somewhat lengthy one, and in case he found it, he would immediately forward it to me. At the same time, he thought that if I had any spare time on my hands, the better plan would be for me to pay him a visit. He said he could accommodate me without difficulty, or in case that I should have any objection to reside with him in consequence of the idea which might arise that I was there under his medical superintendence, he would secure lodgings for me in the neighbouring city of X., only a comfortable walk's distance from the asylum, and I could then visit him as often as I pleased without any fear of a suspicion of the kind arising.

I must say the contents of the letter surprised me greatly, though, at the same time, as I said before, it pleased me to find that, notwithstanding his advanced age (for he must now have been approaching eighty), his health was sufficiently

good to allow him to undertake a work of the kind. With respect to his invitation, I determined to accept it without hesitation. He was a man after my own heart, shrewd, intelligent, and benevolent; and, beyond that, possessing an immense amount of information, especially on subjects connected with his profession, as well as its connection with the public at large. True, I determined not to accept the invitation to reside in his house, and for the following reason. I mentioned before that since I had relinquished my occupation as a press writer and sub-editor, I had suffered from a mental depression which I could hardly account for. I regarded all things with a morbid sort of apathy; and although the chancery suit, to a certain extent, aroused my mental faculties considerably, the result was more painful than natural. I had even begun to fear the approach of the malady of which I had seen instances among men who had overtasked their mental faculties; and the more the subject occupied my mind, the stronger became my dread of a misfortune of the kind. I could easily have applied to physicians of the greatest experience in maladies of the brain, but I dreaded doing so from the fear that thus I

should be admitting the possibility of the occurrence. Now I could introduce the subject when I pleased, as a mere topic of conversation, to my friend Watson, who, I was certain, would give me the best advice in his power. Beyond that, as I said before, I was always interested in his conversation, and that would be more likely to stimulate my mind again into a healthy condition than brooding over it in solitude in my own home; and this was the more likely inasmuch as all my old acquaintances, with the exception of Watson, were dead, and I felt not the slightest inclination to make new ones. So having maturely considered the subject, I resolved to accept Watson's proposition, and I immediately wrote to him that at the end of the week I should leave London for X., and take up my residence for a short time at the principal hotel in the town, and that I should certainly profit by his kindness, not only to search among the old documents in the asylum, but also to have with him some lengthened conversations respecting bygone days, and other subjects of interest.

END OF VOL. II.

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